MEDIEVAL ASSAM–A STUDY IN ITS MILITARY ACTIVITIES (1200-1675 A. D.)

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CERTIFICATE

CERTIFIED that the work incorporated in thesis MEDIEVAL ASSAM—A STUDY IN ITS MILITARY ACTIVITIES (1200-1675 A.D.) submitted by Shri Bharat Chandra Kalita was carried out by the candidate under my supervision. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

Atan Buragohain	-	Atan Buragohain and His Times
Lachit Barphukan	-	Lachit Barphukan and His Times
ASB	-	(Royal) Asiatic Society of Bengal
ASL	-	Asiatic Society Library, Calcutta.
CSSS	-	Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta
DHAS	-	Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati
Ed.	-	Edited
Edn.	-	Edition
Ed. & Com.	-	Edited and Compiled
B.I.	-	Bibliotheca Indica
J.I.H.	-	Journal of Indian History
I.H.R.	-	Indian Historical Review
G.I.L.	-	Gokhale Institute Library, Pune
MS	-	Manuscript
MSS	-	Manuscripts
Tr.	-	Translated
I.C.	-	Islamic Culture, Hyderabad
JBORS	-	Journal of Bihar and Orissa Society
SKM	-	Sukumar Mahanta

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The political history of medieval Assam has not so far received its due share from historians. The period under review i.e. 1200 to 1675 A.D. witnessed many political upheavals in Assam. The country which was leading a life of splendid isolation during the ancient times suddenly came under attack by foreign powers which were trying to conquer and settle in this sub-continent. How and to what extent Assam defended itself during this critical period of its history deserve special attention. An attempt therefore has been made in this present work to study the military activities of Medieval Assam.

Scope and Nature of the Work

The scope of this work covers mainly the military and politico-strategic aspects of medieval Assam. Some attempts so far have been made to connect the link of Assam history but no proper spade-work has been done in the military and politico-strategic aspects which led to the several ups and downs in the battlefields with consequent repercussion on internal and regional political and social development. It is true as said by John Buchanan (The Causal and Casual in History, p. 17) that our knowledge of the past is only partial and this is not only because of the paucity of materials and

their conflicting human mind in giving proper interpretation to the known facts. Moreover all events in history cannot be explained with reference to cause and effect apparent and real.

Assam, a remote part of India, has been little known to other parts of India. The contention "Assam is a country, which at most periods of its history, has remained outside the Indian civilisation" (Cambridge History of India, Vol.I, pp. 11-12), will be found to be disputed if the history and the relationship of Assam is traced from pre-historical and historical events. In the Epic age Assam's contact with rest of India has been found on many accounts. In historical period the whole of India was not knitted together by one political or administrative thread all the time. But there are other factors through which Indianness has been asserted and generated throughout the land. These are migration of people, attention paid and expedition conducted from the heartland, trade and commerce, cultural influence and religious link. Examining these means, Assam's relationship with the rest of the country can be properly gauged. Through this work of military contacts with Muslim rulers, Assam's close link with the rest of India will be established besides highlighting the political, social and economic ramification of Assam during the medieval period.

Summary of the Chapters

Military activities of Assam in the medieval period are manifold. Before the arrival of the Ahoms, the entire

land was divided into some tribal states or principalities. Frequent warfares and rivalries used to crop up in between them. The Brahmaputra valley in the lower part was under Kamarup ruled by several lines of Aryan dynasties of which King Niladhwaj in this period earned prominence. With the establishment of Koch dynasty, Kamarup, a part of Assam, joined with the part of Bengal to form a separate kingdom called Koch Bihar for certain period of history. When Koch Bihar got split into two parts as Koch Bihar and Koch Hajo, the prominence of Ahom in Assam as the ruling dynasty rose to its pitch high. The Ahoms fought series of battles against the other ruling principalities like the Naras, Nagas, Chutias, Kacharies, Dimasas, Boros, Jaintias to overpower them. The Ahoms also played aggressive diplomacy backed by armed support whenever necessary against number of border feudal lords who used to attain autonomy. Amongst them the ten Rajas of Lower Assam, Baro Bhuyans, Koch kings are worth mentioning. Finally by the middle of the 16th century, the Ahoms attained their mastery over Assam and became the truly ruling house and the rest of the tribes also converted slowly into Assamese fold with a common culture and tradition. Soon after, the Ahoms also forgot their foreign identity and got themselves absorbed with the all-pervading process of Assamitization. The repeated onslaughts of Assam by external powers could be repulsed only with the Ahom's skill of warfare and shrewdness of diplomacy.

Expeditions to Assam started from the Sultanate period.

Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji, the Turkish General of Sultan Kutubuddin on the way of his pretended Chinese expeditions entered Kamarup in 1205 A.D. The Raja of Kamarup Niladhwaj by making a clever trap destroyed the entire force of Bakhtiyar. After that as many as eight powerful expeditions followed till 1529 A.D. Some of these were protracted and costly. A few of them attained success for a short duration at heavy cost. But finally had to make withdrawal or perished. The last expedition of this period was badly mauled in the naval engagement of Timeni and land battle of Singri. During this period a considerable number of Muslim soldiers on their voluntary options were rehabilitated in Assam, thereby making the beginning of Muslim settlements in North-East frontier of India.

Mughal expedition to Assam started from 1612 A.D. onwards and continued till 1682 A.D. But the battle of Saraighat in 1671-72 A.D. finally decided the Assamese superiority over the great Mughals. The Bengal Governor Islam Khan sent the powerful expedition in 1612 A.D. equipped with cavalry, artillery and navy with a large number of Mansabdars and Hindu Zamindars under the command of Mukarram Khan. This Mughal force attained success in the battle of Dhubri and proceeded upto Pandu near Guwahati fighting number of critical wars on land and water. Great Mughal General Mir Jumla (1662-1663 A.D.) even captured the Ahom Capital Gargaon forcing the Ahom king to flight. But this initial grand success doomed by both predictable and unpredictable events ultimately costing

the untimely death of Mir Jumla. Next important attempt was made by Emperor Aurangzeb by sending Raja Ram Singh for capturing Assam but that was ended with the miserable defeat at the battle of Saraighat in 1671-72 A.D. Assamese policy of appeasement and conciliation to subsidise their armed strength, their ruse and feint and diplomatic manoeuverability ultimately yielded fruits of success through adversities.

That no imperialist during any period of Indian history could subdue Assam despite repeated attacks appears to be a mystery. The organizational skill, efficient Navy, shrewd intelligence system, exploitation of terrain, skilful handling of critical situation and over and above the passionate love of Assamese people for the independence of their country happened to be the main factor of their main success. A nation in arms was the prevailing order and hence at short notice a vast army could be raised to defend against the invaders.

Sources

Historical materials for the period from 1200 A.D. to the beginning of the Mughal expeditions to Assam are meagre and occasionally confusive as a result of ornamentalization in the writings. Treaty agreements, edicts, correspondences, numismatics which are primarily taken to be important sources for assimilation of history are extremely limited for the period 1200 A.D. to 1500 A.D. Records of events left by the contemporary Muslim persons of eminence and persons who accompanied the expeditions besides the official recordings

of the Imperialists form important source-materials to build up the military history of defence and offence of the period under study. Perhaps the Ahom Kings of Assam for the first time in India introduced the system of writing history systematically by engaging official and unofficial persons. More than hundred of these Ahom history called Buranji* have been discovered from various places. These Buranjis are the most valuable record for authentic informations of the period. Contemporary foreign travellers' account and the geographical investigation made by the East India Company officials in the process of their expansionism also supply informations which are to be properly scrutinized before acceptance.

The sources used for making up the geographical identity of Assam on the period of study are the Epics, the Puranas, the Tantras and other mythological literature. These literary works refer to Assam as Kamarupa and Pragjyotishpura. The area and boundary as referred to in these works found to be identical in the references of Periplus of the Erythrean Sea of 1st century A.D., and in the accounts of Chinese visitor Hiuen Tsang of 7th Century A.D. The prevalent traditions of Assam, the existing remnants of roads and bridges, the great Brahmaputra river and many other rivers as mentioned in early literary and historical records make it easy to ascertain the geographical identity. Though tradition cannot be considered

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* This is an Ahom word which means treasure house of knowledge.

always as accurate sources yet comparative and analytical assessment over it helps in sorting out several problems as one has to confront in research works.

Persian and Muslim Sources

Persian writings of the Muslim historians, travellers and Generals are important source for geographical as well as strategic and military knowledge. Minhajuddin Siraj who wrote Tabaqat-i-Nasiri during the middle of 13th century A.D. gives valuable informations of Muhammad-bin-Bakhtiyar Khiliji's Assam invasion in 1205-06 A.D., Ghiasuddin's invasion in 1226 A.D., Nasiruddin's in 1228 A.D. and of Yuzback's invasion in 1256-57 A.D. The author was at Lakhnuati (near Dhaka) when the expeditions took place. Riyaz-us-Salatin of Ghulam Hussayan Salim of the later 13th century A.D. presents the accounts of Bakhtiyar's and Hussayan's expeditions to Assam. Akbar-namah by Shaikh Abul Fazl refers to Mughal intervention in Koch Bihar when there was a rivalry between Lakshmi Narayan and Raghu Narayan the rulers of Koch Bihar and Koch Hajo. Ain-i-Akbari by the same author describes the manners and habits of the inhabitants of Assam. Padshah-namah by Alla Yar Khan, Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah or Tarikh-i-Asham by Muhammad Wali Ahmed surnamed Shihbuddin-Talish gives detailed account of Mir Jumla's Assam invasion. Baharistan-i-Ghaybi by Mirza Nathan alias Shitab Khan narrates the history of conflicts of Mughals with Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa during the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan. Mirza Nathan himself took part in the Assam Campaign and later on he was made Mughal Fouzdar at

Guwahati for some time. This account was first discovered by Sir Jadunath Sarkar and translated into English. Dr. M.I. Borah of Dhaka University (before partition) obtained the original Persian copy from Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris and translated into English. This was published in two volumes by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies of Assam in 1936. I have more often consulted these two volumes.

Muntakhab-ul-Lubab or Tarikh-i-Khafi Khan by Muhammad Hashim Ali Khan surnamed Khafi Khan is an eye-witnessed account of Mughal invasion of Koch Bihar and Assam. This was a work of six contemporary officers of the period of Mir Jumla's Assam expedition. All of them happened to be eye-witness and observers of the events. All the six officers said to have contributed to this account. But with the exception of Khafi Khan, the others decided to be anonymous and used the names Sadiq Khan and Mamuri to conceal their identification. I used the translation of this account by Prof. Anes Jehan Syed, published by Somaiya Publications in 1977.

Maasiri-i-Alamgiri by Mohammed Sadiq Mustaid Khan describes Assam Mughal conflicts of Ram Singh and post-Ram Singh period.

Ahom and Assamese Sources

An anonymous chronicle (Buranji) in Ahom language was restored by British East India Company officer from a Deodhai Pandit in Sibsagar district of Assam in 1894 A.D. This chronicle covers the history of Assam from the earliest time to the end of Ahom rule. Sir Edward Gait, Honorary Director of Ethnography

in Assam got the manuscript translated by Rai Bahadur Gopal Chandra Baruah. Late Baruah had to learn the Ahom language with Deodhai Pandit spending over 3 years before he undertook the translation work. The book was first published in 1930 in Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta along with the Ahom text in Ahom script parallel to English translation. This is one of the most valuable accounts to study the different aspects of Assam history. The title of the book is Ahom Buranji.

The Ahom Buranjis which recorded the Ahom administration describing the events of the regime were written in Ahom language and in old Assamese language and Assamese script. Even the Ahom aristocrats mentioned the Buranjis covering their association with the country and recording the contemporary events of importance in political, social and military fields. Records in Assamese language are also equally important and reliable since Ahoms had adopted Assamese language for official and non-official use. Hundreds of Buranjis have been restored from the individual possession by the curious British administrative officers and by Dr. Surya Kumar Bhuyan, the great scholar of Assam history and the founder of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies of Assam. Dr. Bhuyan has made invaluable contribution in the field of Assam History like Sir Edward Gait who had taken painstaking effort to present the history of Assam in scientific method. About 200 manuscripts of Buranji are preserved with transcription in the archives of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies of Assam, Guwahati. Dr. Bhuyan practically devoted his whole life in

working over these manuscripts and compiled and edited 40 books to make it easy to future scholars. Some of the books of Dr. Bhuyan are: Deodhai Assam Buranji (1932), Assam Buranji from the Text from Sukumar Mahanta, Tungkhungia Buranji (1932), Atan Burangohain and His Times (1957), Lachit Barphukan and His Times, Kamrupar Buranji (1930), Padshah Buranji (1935), Asamar Padya Buranji (1932), Mir Jumlar Asom Akraman, Sharaighatar Subachaini and many more. Many of his works have been translated into English. Dr. Bhuyan's contribution is indispensable for the study of Assam history.

Asamar Buranji by Padmanath Gohain Baruah, a great Ahom scholar and writer, poet and administrator, is a valuable book for an introduction to Assam History from the earliest time to contemporary period. This book was first published in 1899 and since then several reprints have been made. Besides giving information about Assam, he had taken care to mention the contemporary events of India simultaneously with that of Assam. Though some of his information I found to be controversial, it must be admitted that late Gohain's work certainly orient the young generation to work on Assam history.

Another Assam Buranji compiled and edited by S.K. Dutta from old manuscript (original author unknown) covers the period upto 1681 A.D. This was published in 1938 and reliable source of accounts.

English Sources

Accounts of the European travellers who visited Assam and who had recorded their findings and observations in their

travelogues are of important source used for this work. Francis Bernier who visited during 1656-1668 A.D. gives a lot of authentic information on Mughal Assam contacts. His travel account was first published in London in 1891 A.D. (Reprint: Delhi, 1968). First translation into English was by Irvin Brooke and later by Archibald Constable.

Another contemporary French account of J.B. Travernier was rendered into English by V. Ball. The Volume II of this travelogue supplies useful information of this work. Travernier made his voyage to the East in 1630, 1638, 1643 and 1651 and visited different parts of India. The first English translation of this book appeared in 1889.

Francis Hamilton a British officer under East India Company under the instructions of the Company and at the instance of Governor-in-Council conducted a survey in Assam during 1808 to 1814 A.D. This account was compiled and edited by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan and was published by Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies of Assam under the title An Account of Assam.

An account of Assam by Dr. John Peter Wade who accompanied the East India Company Officers as physician had written an account of Assam covering the history of Assam from the earliest times to 1780 A.D. The original text of the account was restored by late Benudhar Sharma and edited and published as An Account of Assam or History of Assam. This book supplies factual information of Ahom-Assam confrontation, Ahom's conflict with Nagas, Koch-Ahom hostility and Ahom-Kachari

conflict; edited and published by Benudhar Sharma under title "An Account of Assam", Guwahati.

The History of Assam by Sir Edward Gait is the monumental work. This history was first published in the year 1906. Sir Gait did the pivotal work on Assam history and became real path-finder for scholars who craved to trace the little known history of Assam. History of Kamrup by Kanaklal Baruah, The History of Civilization of the People of Assam by Dr. P.C. Choudhary are treasure houses of materials for Assam history.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar has brought too many things to light to focus the shady part of Assam history. His History of Aurangzeb in five volumes, The History of Bengal - Muslim period and other works pertaining to Mughals and their contacts with the North-East have been freely consulted.

Forts and Battle-fields Visited

Several forts and battle-fields which have been found mention both in Persian and Assamese records help in assessing the military and strategic importance of the events. I have personally visited the following places in Assam to assess their historic importance and significance. Except the names and geographical locations no other remnants can be found. However their geographical locations certainly prove the importance as acquired in those days. Forts and battle-fields visited are: Dhubri, Barnagar, Hajo, Ranihat, Sualkuchi, Srihat, Sesa, Sharaighat, Pandu, Kajalimukh, Shilsako, Guwahati, Shimalugarah, Gargaon, Garal, Kaliabar, Haligaon. Neighbouring

to these places there are Muslim settlements who claim that they came with the expeditions which fought battles in the specific regions. These Muslim settlements have become completely Assamese from all points of view except their religion. Another Sikh village at Lanka in the district of Nowgoan raises interest when found that they have become Assamese Sikh from the point of view of language and culture. They still follow Sikhism and feel pride that once they belonged to Punjab. The ancestors of these people came to conquer Assam under the Mughal Generals but the disaster they met compelled them to forget their homeland and later happily settled down in Assam. Their intermarriages with Assamese Hindus helped them in their absorption. Most of the villagers pursue agriculture as their main profession. Several aged and learned persons were interviewed to know the things of the past and tally them with the historical records.

Inscriptions

Rock inscriptions at North Guwahati, inscriptions on Cannons at different places as mentioned by E.A. Gait in his Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, Shillong (1897), supply information on Assamese contacts with Muslim invaders.

CHAPTER II

GEOGRAPHICAL IDENTITY OF THE REGION

Ahom and Assam are inter-related terms. The word Ahom means the SHAN or the TAI people who migrated to the Brahmaputra valley in the 13th Century A.D. from their original homeland MUNGMAN or PONG situated in upper Burma on the Irrawaddy river. The word Assam refers to the Brahmaputra valley and the adjoining areas where the Shan people settled down and formed a kingdom with the intention of permanently absorbing in the land and its heritage.

From the prehistoric period to about 13th/14 Century A.D. Assam was referred to as Kamarupa and Pragjyotisha in Indian literary works and historical accounts.

Early Period : Area and Jurisdiction

In the Ramayana and Mahabharata and in the Puranik and Tantrik literature, there are numerous references to ancient Assam, which was known as Pragjyotisha in the epics and Kamarupa in the Puranas and Tantras.

When the stories related to it inserted in the Mahabharata, it stretched southward as far as the Bay of Bengal and its western boundary was river Karotoya. This was then a river of the first order and united in its bed the streams which now form the Tista, the Kosi and the Mahanada.[1]

According to the most of the Puranas dealing with geography of the earlier period, the kingdom extended upto the river Karatoya in the west and included Manipur, Jayantia, Cachar, parts of Mymensing, Sylhet, Rangpur and portions of Bhutan and Nepal.[2]

The Yogini Yantra (VI:16-18) describes the boundary as -

> Nepalasya Kancanadrin Bramaputrasye Samagamam
> Karotoyam Samarabhya Yavad Dipparavasinam
> Uttarasyam Kanjagirah Karatoyatu pascime
> tirtharestha Diksunadi Purvasyam giri Kanyake
> Daksine Brahmaputrasya Laksayan Samgamavadhih
> Kamarupa iti Khyatah Sarva Sastresu niscitah.

In the Kalika Purana it is said that the temple Kamakshya near Guwahati was the centre of Kamarupa and in Vishnu Purana it is added that the country extended around this temple for 100 yojanas or about 450 miles.[3]

From the first and second century description of Periplus it can be found that the extent of the kingdom covered beyond river Karatoya to include the region to the east of the Kausika and its eastern boundary was extended to the Sadiya region.[4]

N. K. Bhattasali also contends that the Kingdom of Kamarupa in the 1st century A.D. extended upto the gulf of Meghana,* probably upto Noakhali* and Chittagaon* coasts.[5]

During the age of Maurya imperialism and perhaps until

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* Presently the Meghana, Noakhali and Chittagaon are in Bangladesh.

the beginning of the Christian era, the kingdom was confined roughly upto its modern boundary in the west. This is confirmed by the Brhat Samhita based on the Parasara Tantra of the beginning of the Christian era.[6]

During the Gupta imperialism 4th-5th century A.D., Kamarupa comprised of a limited area but in 8th century A.D. as proved by Nidhanpur Grant and confirmed by Hiuen Tsang the kingdom included Karnasuvarna,* Pundravardhana* and probably the eastern part of Nalanda region.[7]

In the introduction of Firishta's History it is related that Kidar Brahman a powerful king of Northern India was overthrown by Shankal or Shangaldil who came from the eastern tract of River Karatoya or Kamarupa. He first conquered Bang or the country east of the Bhagirathi, and Bihar and then collected an enormous army and vanquished Kidar in several hard-fought battles. He founded the city of Gaur or Lakhnauti, which remained the capital of the kings of Bengal for two thousand years.[8]

About 1198 A.D., Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji overthrew Lakhmaniya, the last Sen king of Bengal, and few years later he set out on a filibustering expedition to the north. At this time the ruler of Kamarupa bore the title of Kameswara and his western boundary was River Karatoya.[9]

Medieval Period

Before the arrival of the Ahoms the prevalent name 'Assam'

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* Karnasuvarna and Punarvardhana were the parts of ancient Bengal.

was not known. In early chronological accounts of Ahoms, this region was mentioned as *MUNGDUNSHUNKHAM.[10]

After the expansion of the Ahom kingdom by their first king Sukapha, the land was gradually known to be Assam. Earlier from the river Dikrai to the river Karatoya, this land was known as Kamarupa. At that time the land was divided into four parts. They were: from River Karatoya to River Subarnarekha or Sankosh was Kampeeth, from River Sankosh to River Rupahi - Ratnapeeth, from River Rupahi to Bharali - Swarnapeeth, and from Bharali to River Dikrai - Soumarpeeth. It is where in Soumarpeeth the Ahoms first built up their kingdom.[11]

In the early Ahom period, the northern limits of Assam were the mountain inhabited by the Bhutanese, Akas, Daflas and Abors. The eastern boundaries were the hills peopled by the Mishimis and Singphos and they extended to the borders of China. On the south were the Garo, Khasi and Naga hills.[12]

In a letter to Raja Prananarayan of Koch Bihar, written in September 1663 A.D., King Jayadhwaj Singha of Assam defined the boundaries of the kingdom of Swarga-narayanadeva - a grandfather of Sukapha as follows: "Kher (China) on the east, Gauda (Bengal) on the west, Rukhango (Arracan) on the south and Lalung (Bhutan and Tibet) on the north. Landha (Jaintia) was given to the first son, Assam to the second and Rukhanga to his nephew.[13]

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* The meaning of this Ahom word is: mung = country, dun = full, shun = garden, kham = gold, i.e., a country full of gardens of gold.

Parikshit's brother, Balinarayan/Dharmanarayan was installed by the Ahoms as the Raja of Darrang which lies on the north bank to the east of Barnadi river opposite Guwahati. It also included the strip of country between Kaliabar and Guwahati on the south bank. The close proximity of the two powerful and expanding states led to inevitable clashes and conflicts, and this state of affairs continued intermittently for 68 years, i.e., 1614-1682 A.D.[14]

According to Dr. John Peter Wade* who visited Assam in 1796, Assam extended between the parallel of 25-45 and 27-30 degrees of North latitude and from 90-95 to between 98 or 99 degrees of East latitude. The kingdom of Assam was 700 miles in length and from 60-80 miles in breadth. The surface area according to moderate calculation considered to be 60,000 sq. miles. The kingdom was divided by the great stream of Brahmaputra into 3 grand divisions called Uttarkol or Uttarpar, Dakhinkol or Dakhinpar and Majuli island. The first denoted the provinces lying on the north side of the Brahmaputra; the second, those on the south; and the Majuli was a large island in the middle of the Brahmaputra. It was also divided into upper and lower Assam. The first included the country above Kaliabar, where the river diverges into two considerable streams as far as the mountains combine to the north and south. This division included the whole of Assam at an early period, but

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* He was an inquisitive doctor accompanying the British East India officials to Assam as physician. He wrote an account of Assam.

the lower provinces to the westward having been afterwards annexed by the conquest to the dominions of the Swargadeo, became a separate government under an officer entitled Bar-Phukan with the powers of a viceroy.[15]

Walter Hamilton in his 'Description of Hindustan Volume II' described the kingdom of Assam as:

"This remote country adjoins the provinces of Bengal at the North East corner about 91st degree of E. longitude, from whence it stretches in an easternly direction to an undefined extent; but it is probable that about the 96th degree of east longitude, it meets the northern part of AVA and is separated by an intervening space of about 180 miles from the province of Yunan in China. In this direction it follows the course of the Brahmaputra, and is in fact the valley through which the noble stream flows. The average breadth of the valley may be estimated at 70 miles, although in a few places of Upper Assam, where the mountain recedes furthest, the breadth considerably exceeds that extent. In its greatest dimensions Assam may be estimated at 350 miles in length by 60 miles the average breadth; divided into 3 provinces Camroop on the west, Assam proper in the centre, and Sadiya at the eastern extremity.

"The present territory of Assam Raja nowhere reaches the northern hills, the Deb Raja of Bhootan having taken possession of all the territory adjacent thereto, which is a modern usurpation since the breaking out of the disturbances that have so long desolated this unhappy province.

"The western province named Camroop with several sub-

ordination or intermixed petty jurisdiction, extends from the British boundary to near the celebrated temple of Middle Kamakhya, latitude 26° 36' N. longitude 92° 56' being about 130 miles in length. From the boundary opposite to Goalpara to Nagarbera a distance of 21 miles, the Assamese possess only the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, so that on the south side the length of the province is only 109 miles. Its width on the south side on an average about 30 miles. About 104 miles above Gohati, which stands in longitude 91° 48' E the Brahmaputra separates into two branches and encloses an island five days journey in length and about one in width. This province contains many low hills covered with woods, and also a great extent of fine low land all susceptable of cultivation.

"The river Cailasi is alleged to have been formerly the boundary between the British territory and Assam; but now no part of that river passes through the British dominions. The encroachment of the Assamese is said to have taken place sometime between the years 1770 and 1780, when six small districts were taken from Bijnee, then tributary to Bengal. At present, the Assam territory, where it is entered from Bengal, commences on the north of the Brahmaputra at Kandar, and on the south at Nagarbera hill. On the north, Assam is bounded by the successive mountain ranges of Bhootan, Auka, Duffala and Miree and on the south by Garrows mountains, which rise in proportion to their progress eastward and change the name Garrow to that of Naga."[16]

It will be relevant here to quote Sir J. N. Sarkar's geographical description of medieval Assam -

"At the extreme North-Eastern corner of our country, through a cleft in the Himalayan range, the drainage of the Tibet plateau escapes into India. Arrested by the rocky wall of the Garo Khasia and Naga Hills on the south, the mighty volume of water sweeps westwards, scoring out a deep and broad bed nearly four hundred miles long from Sadiya to Dhubri and then turn due south to mingle with the Ganges at Goalnanda. This river is the Brahmaputra and its valley is the province of Assam. From East Bengal it is divided by the long succession of hills that begin at the south-west corner of the province and end, in the extreme east, in the Patkai range, the border-line between Assam and Burma.

"The copious rainfall on the eastern Himalayas descending in torrents, has carved many a river which cut up the plains north of the Brahmaputra into a number of valleys, each bounded by rivers on three sides and by mountain on the fourth. The successive advances of the Assam Kingdom have been westwards and its shrinkages eastwards from one of these feeder rivers to the next. The rivers - the Bharali, the Bar Nadi, the Manas and the Sankosh have been the boundary between the kingdom of Assam and its rivals, Kuch Bihar or Mughal India, in different ages. The south Brahmaputra valley is similarly furrowed by the innumerable streams, but these have in general a western or markedly north western inclination.

"Closely surrounded in the north, east and south by

rugged hills whose slopes are held by savage tribes, Assam is practically imperious to attack from these directions. But it is not so well protected in the west, where it merges in the plains of North Bengal. From Kuch Bihar side invasions have been easily conducted into north Brahmaputra valley, and armies, have also sometimes marched into Assam from Dacca by following the left bank of the Brahmaputra and turning the extreme western end of the Garo hills. But every hostile army operating in Southern Assam, must depend for its success, and even for its very life, on the support of a strong flotilla of war boats. If it loses the command of the water high ways it is crushed between the river in the north and savage haunted hills in the south."[17]

Conclusion

The above accounts put the geographical location of Assam at the advent of the Ahoms in 13th century along the Brahmaputra valley. Its boundary on the north was Tibet and China; on the south was Nagas and Kacharis; on the east were Singphos and Chutiyas and on the west was Kamata comprising of Koch Hajo and Koch Bihar besides Jayantias and Dimurias. The Ahoms soon after their arrival had fought number of wars with all the neighbours and finally were successful in bringing them under their subordination. As a result of this when the Ahoms first confronted the Mughals in the 16th century A.D. the Ahom kingdom comprised of the whole of Brahmaputra valley and Chutiya territory. The Ahoms allowed the neighbouring rulers

to rule as autonomous rulers paying tribute to the Ahom king. When Kamarupa was brought under the Mughal subordination as a result of the internal rivalry of the ruling Koch dynasty, Ahom kingdom came into direct confrontation with the Mughals. In this context we find that Kamarupa, Goalpara and Darrang districts of the modern period were sometimes under the control of the Muslims and sometimes under Ahoms. Finally, the three districts also merged to Assam in 17th century.

To get a clear vision of the political condition of the whole of Assam on the eve of Mughal confrontation it is necessary to find out the number of kingdoms and principalities in existence in Assam and how this multi-state system of the region was brought under Ahom unity and solidarity.

Notes

1. Sir E.A. Gait. History of Assam, pp. 10, 11; Ramayana - Kiskindhya Khand, p. 42; and Mahabharata - Sabha Parvan, pp. 34, 51.
2. Dr. P.C. Choudhury. History of Civilization of Assam, p.45. Wilson. Vishnu Purana V, p. 88. Martin. Eastern India III, p. 403. Robinson. Descriptive Account of Assam, p. 146.
3. E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 13. Kalika Purana, Chapters 36-40.
4. Schoff. Periplus of the Erythrian Sea, pp.47, 48, 261, 278.
5. Bhattasali. Indian Historical Quarterly, XXII, pp.245-252.
6. Dr. P.C. Choudhury, op.cit., p. 45.
7. Ibid., p. 46.
8. Elliot. History of India, pp. 553-554. E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 19. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Annals of Delhi Badshahate.
9. E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 37.
10. G.C. Baruah. Ahom Buranji.
11. Padmanath Gohain Baruah. Asamar Buranji, p. 30. E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 1.
12. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Atan Buragohain, p. 10.
13. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
14. Ibid., p. 23.
15. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Tungkhungia Buranji, p. xxvii. John Peter Wade. Descriptive Accounts of Assam, p. i.
16. Walter Hamilton. Description of Hindustan, Vol. II, Indian Edn., 1971, pp. 740-741.
17. Sir J.N. Sarkar. History of Aurangzeb, Vol. III, pp.146-147.

CHAPTER III

THE AHOMS AND THE TRIBAL RAJAS — MILITARY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ASPECT

Sukapha, the first known Ahom King to enter Assam in the year 1228 A.D. brought with him 3,000 cooking pots (Motangs) each pot was sufficient for cooking three men's food. From the number of cooking pots it may be assumed that he had eight thousand armed companions with him. Besides, he had with him a few elephants and 300 horses* with covered eyes.[1]

<u>Encounter with Nagas</u>

On his way down to the valley his first encounter was with the Nagas.@ A great number of Nagas were killed and many of them were made captives. Some Nagas were cut into pieces and their flesh cooked. Then Sukapha made the younger brother eat the cooked flesh of his elder brother and father of his sons. Thus Sukapha not only destroyed the Naga village but also terrorised them with utmost brutalities. These tales of brutalities spread over the neighbouring villages and being very much afraid acknowledged their subjugation. The part of

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* Most of the historians are of the opinion that the Ahoms did not know the use of horses. Actually they gradually reduced the importance on cavalry due to the unsuitable terrain conditions.

@ Nagas are the original inhabitants of the hilly tracts of Assam. They are divided into several tribes and each tribe lives independently.

the territory conquered was given under the responsibility of one noble.[2]. The Naga villages which were first destroyed and then brought under the control of the Ahoms, are mentioned as Khrarukhung, Pungkkong, Tikhang, Binglang, Latoma, Lanpak, Taru, Tapa, Tapu, Luknam, Lukna, Papukia, Tangtingia, Jakhrangia, Khamtengia, Khunkhatia, Khuntungia. The noble who was posted in the region was Kang Jang Mung with headquarter at Khamgang.[3]

The Nagaland spreading over a larger territorial jurisdiction was a difficult terrain. It spared no time to create trouble through rebellion against the Ahoms. Over and above amongst the various clans of the Nagas there used to be wars and in-fightings. When there was Naga trouble in the neighbourhood of the Ahom dominions the Ahom king sent powerful officers and forces to suppress them.[4]

In the year Lakli Kamut (1513 A.D. approx.) the ruler of the Banfry Naga clan with a valuable presentation approached the Ahom king for his help against Bantyang Naga ruler who regularly used to create trouble for him. The Ahom king sent a powerful force under Buragohain who defeated the Bantyang clan, and restored order amongst the fighting clans. Bantyang sent a handsome gift to the Ahom king.[5]

The Nagas are an interesting tribe. Their life style both military and political are influenced by the geographical condition. Dr. H.K. Barpujari has made the following account about the Nagas and their neighbours.

"The irregular chain of mountains which runs from the

Patkais westward is known as Assam Range and its various parts are named after the tribes that inhabit them - the Garo, the Khasi, the Jaintia and Naga Hills. Numerous streams descend down from these hills and increasing in volume they empty themselves on the Brahmaputra on north. Brodie divides the Nagas in the east of the river Dikhow into two categories - Abor or independent and Bori or dependent. The former lived in the interior of the hills bordering the plains and had frequent contact with inhabitants of the lowlands, and their different clans - Talelungias, Pandiduarias, Barduarias, Namsangias - were designated after the names of the duars by which they frequented the plains. Likewise the Nagas between the rivers Dikhow and Dayang were classified into several groups - Namsangias, Dupdarias, Assyringias, Hatighorias and Lhotas.

"Of all the Nagas, the Angamis were the most virile and numerous tribe who inhabitated the hills bounded by the river Dayang on the east and Barail range on the south."[6]

L.W. Shakespear in his books "History of Upper Assam, Upper Burmah and North-Eastern Frontier" has described the Nagas as under:

"The name by which they are now usually known, namely, Naga, has nothing whatever to do with snakes as some think, but is a corruption of the word 'nanga' - naked. Of all people in north-east Assam these are the most powerful and have given us more persistent trouble since 1832 than any others. They inhabit the hill country south of Brahmaputra Valley from the

Singhaphos to the North Cachar hills, and are divided into four big tribal sections - Angami, Sema, Aoh, Lhota - and two smaller ones - Rengma and Kaccha Nagas. Of these, the first-named have proved the most turbulant and warlike. Their origin is rather doubtful, some Savants ascribing a Mongolian origin, namely, that they are an offshoot of the very earliest migration from the neighbourhood of the Kiunlung range as carried out first by the Chins, who located themselves far to the south in the hills between Lushais and Irrawadi valley. Others in the past have thought that they can trace their origin to the Dyaks of Borneo, who in some far-off age, it is surmised, may have trekked north through the straits, Tenasserin, southern Burma and Arakan, until they were brought to a standstill by either the vast walls of the Himalayas or by the southern trend of Mongolian peoples. They recognize a slight resemblance in matters of counting, names for domestic implements, in a way village architecture and their head-hunting propensities, to those of Dyaks. While their love for marine shells may seem to point to a bygone home near the sea; though now they are far inland residing community. The Nagas particularly the Angamis are an athletic and by no means a bad-looking race, and are in religion spirit worshippers. Their weapons are spear seven feet long and over and short assegais which are thrown with great skill for twentyfive yards and more, a heavy battle-axe, or 'dao'.

"Their villages are build high on hills, strongly defended with stockades, stout walls and 'panjied' ditches.

The approaches to most of these are along narrow winding sunken paths. All Nagas are head-hunters, their women being the chief incentive to this pursuit, as girls will not look on men with favour who have not taken heads or been in raids. The women induce men desiring their favour to go across the border and take head.

"The Aoh Nagas are found from Dayang river almost to the great bend of the Dikkoo (Dikhow) river as it emerges from hills into the plains, and they occupy the three ranges of hills lying between the latter river and the Assam Valley. The Rengma and Lhota Nagas are uninteresting people with dirty persons and villages. The Sema Nagas are the next largest tribe to the Ao and Angamis but not quite so warlike as the latter. But they are fine sturdy race and have chiefs among them with real power to rule.

"Village arrangements and architecture are different in each tribe, the Angamis having the larger more permanently built houses, the Rengmas and Lhotas building smaller and meander-looking dwellings, the Aohs and Lenglas again living in large villages, the individual house being lightly built of Bamboo and standing high off the ground on piles.

"The first time the Nagas are noticed in history is through the Ahom 'buranjis' and show that as far back as 1530 the Nagas of Namsang and Tabhlung on the Dikkoo river,within twelve miles of Tamlu were sufficiently powerful to defeat an Ahom race and capture several guns. Mention is again made in 1648 of considerable trouble with the Nagas of Lakma, a big

village lying some fifteen miles into hills east of Charaideo. The end of that century saw more Naga raids put down drastically, and an embankment called the Naga Alli raised as a protection against their incursions."[7]

Annexation of Chutia Kingdom

This Chutia* kingdom was founded towards the end of the 13th century A.D. when Kamarupa kings lost their hold over the eastern part of the kingdom and the capital was transferred to Kamatapur. As the tradition goes the son of a petty chieftain ruling at Sonagiri with the divine blessings founded the Chutia line of rulers. His name was Ratnadhwaj Pala alias Gaurinarayan. According to Ahom Buranjis the ninth king of the dynasty Dharmadhwaj Pal alias Dhiranarayan was contemporary of Suhummung, the Dihingia Raja and that he invaded the Ahom territories in 1513 A.D. It can therefore be easily placed Ratnadhwaj in the middle of the 13th century A.D.[8]

Towards the middle of the 14th century the Ahom king came into conflict with the Chutias. At length in 1336 A.D. there was a reconciliation. The Chutia king visited the Ahom king Sutupha and invited the latter to witness a boat race. When Sutupha came to attend the regatta he was treacherously murdered. Sutupha was succeeded after an interregnum by Tyao Khamti and he marched against the Chutias and chastised them. After this there was further hostilities between the Ahom and Chutias till Lakli Mungnut (1513 A.D. approx.). The Chutia

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* Another original inhabitants of Assam living in plains.

king Dhiranarayan made a hostile march against the Ahom king with a flotilla of boats but was repulsed by the Ahoms. Warfare continued till 1523 A.D. when the Ahom king Suhummung, who personally conducted the operation defeated the Chutias who then sued for peace. The Ahoms demanded the gold cat which was the heirloom of the Chutia kings. As this demand was not complied with hostilities were resumed. The Chutias bravely defended their position for quite some time. At length made strategic withdrawal and occupied an almost impregnable hill with a precipitous frontage. The Ahoms ascended the hill holding on to creepers (ghila plant) and surprised the Chutias who fled and took their last stand at a place called Mathadang. Here a severe engagement took place wherein the Chutia king and his eldest son were killed. The principal queen then committed suicide. The youngest son Sadhak Narayan was an infant and was spared by the Ahoms.[9]

The Dangarias* plundered the family of the Chutia king of their gold and silver umbrellas, gold and silver piras (stools), gold and silver bracelets. The heads of Chutia king and his son were chopped off and presented before the Ahom king who buried them at the base of the stairs attached to the Deoghars at Charaideo.** The king wished to arrange the affair of the Chutia territory in the proper way. He did not like to allow any descendants of the Chutia king to govern

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* High officials of Ahom Administration.

** Religious Metropolis of the Ahoms.

their country. He sent two high officers to put the Chutia country in order. The above officers were provided with other personnels. Subsequently the whole of Chutia country was annexed (1523 A.D.) and the administration was put under a new office of state, known as Sadia Khowa Gohain. In order to strengthen his position, three hundred Ahoms of the Gharphalia clan, with their families and twelve chieftains were removed from Gargaon to Sadiya and another contingent of the same clan were made to settle on the banks of the Dihing river. The royal family, with the leading men amongst the Chutias were deposed to Pakariguri, while a number of Brahmins and blacksmiths and other artisans were taken from Sadia to Ahom capital. Subsequent attempts of the Chutias to revolt against Ahoms were suppressed.[10]

Subordination of Nara Raja

The Naras were regarded by the Ahoms as their kinsmen. In the fabulous or half fabulous accounts of Khunlung and Khunlai, the former is credited with having occupied the western portion of the country, i.e., tract around Mungkang in Hukong valley. From this time, down to its conquest by Samlungpha about A.D. 1215 the Shan chronicles contained only a few vague references to this tract as the country of the Naras and it seems to have formed an entirely independent state.[11]

As narrated in Buranji there was a war between the Naras or Shans of Mungkong and the people of Mantara or Burmah. The Naras were worsted by the latter then they appealed for

help to Ahom king Sutenpha who replied that he would send a force to the assistance if the Nara king would give him a daughter in marriage. The latter declined to do so and the quarrel ensued and Sutenpha sent an expedition against the Naras, but his troops were defeated and the Buragohain who commanded the Ahom force was slain. The Bargohain was promptly sent with a second force but instead of fighting he came to terms with his enemies. On his return he was disgraced and imprisoned. He was subsequently forgiven on the intercession of the other nobles.[12]

In the year Lakli Plekchinga (1565-67) the Nara Raja attacked the village Bardeonia in Ahom territory. The Ahom king sent three able officers with 1,000 soldiers to defeat and repulse the intruders. After a severe battle the Nara Raja admitted his defeat and sent his ambassador to the Ahom king with peace offer promising his own sister to the king along with some other gifts. The Ahom king reciprocated by sending his daughter along with some other gifts to the Nara king.[13]

In 1576 the Nara king of Mungkong advanced with an army to Khamjang. The Ahoms entrenched themselves at Pangro, but hostilities were averted by a treaty under which Sukhampha undertook to pay Rs. 1600 to Nara Raja who in return promised to give him his daughter. Since the promised daughter was not sent, the Ahom king Sukhampha deputed three men to abduct the daughter. They were caught and when the Nara Raja learnt that they had been dispatched under Sukhampha's orders he at once

took the matter to be a serious offence. Out of the three persons one could make his escape, the other two were axed to death and the flesh was distributed to crows and kites. He made elaborate arrangements to teach a lesson to the Ahoms by invading Ahom territory. The Nara king with powerful force came down and captured Rurum and Kheram territory and Namrup villages from Ahoms. Sukhampha ordered Tipam Raja, Charing Raja, Bargohain, Barpatra Gohain to move against the Nara invading force. After severe engagement Ahom force defeated the Nara Raja who took to his flight to the hills. Indeed the Burhagohain was slain to death by the Naras in the battle-field.[14]

Eastern Kachari Kingdom

At the times of Ahom intrusion to Assam the Kacharis ruled in two distinct parts of the country. One branch of the Kacharis headed by the king Manik was ruling a kingdom of which jurisdiction was Sadiya in the east, Dikhoumukh in the west, river Dihing on the north and Dilish and Kenduguri in the south.[15]

In 1229 A.D. when the Ahoms entered Assam they confronted this branch of the Kacharis and defeated them in battle. Ahom king Sukapha then forced them to leave their land. The Kacharis who survived in this confrontation moved across the river Dikhau and joined their brethren who had already carved out a country in this part. This branch of the Kacharis was ruling over the land in between the river Dikhau

and river Dhansiri. Now both the branches of the Kacharis made a strong force and expanded their country covering a large part of land.[16]

Western Kachari Kingdom

The combined force of the Sadiya and Dhansiri branches of the Kacharis fast expanded their territory leading to the clash and confrontation with the Ahom kingdom. This led to the several wars with the Kacharis. In the early period, i.e., 13th/14th century A.D., Ahoms met several defeats in the hands of the Kacharis. In the month of Chaitra in Lakli Kapsang the Kacharis attacked the Ahom kingdom and a battle was fought between the two parties on the bank of the river Dikhau. The Kacharis defeated the Ahoms. The Ahoms made peace with Kacharis by offering an Ahom princess with other valuables to the Kachari king.[17]

In 1524 A.D. Kachari king Phukloeming, entered into the Ahom village Bardeyalia and plundered the villagers. This led to a war between the Ahoms and Kacharis in which the latter were defeated. The Kachari king sent an envoy to the Ahom king offering his daughter and other valuable presentations. The Ahom king accepted the peace offer and reciprocated by offering an Ahom princess. But this peace did not last long. The Kacharis made inroad to Ahom territory in the last year. The Ahom king and his son made preparations to march against the enemy. This time the Ahom king and his son made elaborate preparations for an encircling movement to capture the Kachari

capital. This strategic movement was made both by land and water - while the king led the land contingent the Dangaris (High Officers) made a naval attack. Despite the massive attack by the Kacharis on the Ahom's advancing forces the Kacharis were defeated. Both sides suffered heavy casualties. Ahoms returned back after teaching a good lesson to the Kacharis though at a heavy cost.[18]

In 1531 A.D. Ahom king Shuhum despatched some officers to construct a fort at Marangi claiming to be an Ahom border village between the two countries. Kachari king took it to be an intrusion to his country and serious threat to his domain from this fort. So he sent his brother to attack the Ahoms before the fort was constructed. A severe battle took place between the two parties in which the Kacharis were badly beaten and the king's brother was also killed. In order to punish the Kacharis for this attack and for encroachment elsewhere the Ahom king proceeded up the Dhansiri with a large army and halted at the juncture of the Dayang and Dhansiri rivers. A night attack was made on a place called Nika, which was taken and burnt. The Ahoms then proceeded to Dingput, where the army was divided into two divisions, one ascending the left and the other right bank of the Dhansiri. Kacharis were defeated and pursued them as far as their capital at Dimapur. The Kachari king fled with his son, and a relative of the royal family named Detsung was set up in the Dimapur throne by the Ahoms. King Detsung offered his sister to Ahom

king Suhungmung with numerous presentations.[19]

In about 1536 A.D. there was again an attempt by the Kacharis to carry out aggression against the Ahom territory. A powerful Ahom force headed by the Ahom king and his brother advanced and arrived at Marangi. From Marangi proceeded further to meet the Kacharis at Hamdai. After a hard battle, both at land and water, the Kachari force was defeated and their king also fell in the battle. Ahom army advanced upto the Kachari capital and entered into the palace. In the deserted capital no one was left except the king's mother who was speared to death by Ahom soldier.[20]

Afterwards the Kacharis left Dimapur and shifted to Mayang or Maibong along the valley of the river Muhuri where they had carved out a small territory under Chakradhwaj. It is not possible to find out the records of the Kacharis of this period. But from the Bansabali of the Darrang-Rajas it may be suggested that the Kachari king was defeated about the middle of the 16th century by Chilarai, the brother and the General of the great Koch king Nar Narayan.[21]

The Kacharis emerged to be again a powerful nation in the 17th century by conquering a greater part of the Nowgong district and North Kachar Hills and gradually extending their rule into the plains of Kachar. At the beginning of the 17th century the Kachari king Satrudaman led an expedition against the Jaintia king Dhan Manik who was defeated and forced to pay tribute. Dhan Manik also gave two princesses to the Kachari

king and made over his nephew an heir-apparent Jesa Manik as a hostage to Satrudaman soon after Dhan Manik died. Satrudaman thereupon released Jesa Manik from captivity and made him king of Jaintia but Satrudaman insisted that he be recognized as overlord by Jesa Manik. Manik resented this but being unable himself to offer any effective resistance to the Kacharis, he endeavoured to embroil them with the Ahom king, Pratap Singh. He offered Pratap Singh his daughter in marriage on the condition that he should send to fetch her through the Kachari kingdom. The refusal of Satrudaman to permit the girl to be taken through his dominions led, as Jesa Manik had hoped, to a war with the Ahoms. The Kachari troops were defeated in the first encounter, but they subsequently surprised and destroyed the Ahom garrison at Raha. Satrudaman celebrated his success by assuming the title Pratap Narayan and changing the name of his capital from Maibang to Kirtipur. The Ahom king prepared to take his revenge, but at this juncture, he heard rumours of an approaching Muhammedan invasion and hence feigned to make peace. Satrudaman was succeeded by his son Nar Narayan who died after a brief reign and was followed by Bhim Darpa who had acted as Commander-in-Chief during the war with Ahoms. He died in 1637 A.D. and was followed by his son Indra Ballabh. Indra Ballabh with a gesture of friendship sent an envoy to Ahom capital with presents and a note of communications. The tone of this communication gave offence, as being too independent and his envoy met with a very cool reception.[22]

In 1644 A.D. Bir Darpa Narayan who succeeded Indra Ballabh, re-opened communication with Ahom king, but he was told that the style of his letter was too unbecoming on the part of a protected prince. Bir Darpa took exception to the appellation 'protected' but apparently withdrew his objection on being promised an Ahom princess in marriage. His relations with Ahoms, however, continued to be unsatisfactory, and in 1660 he was warned that if he failed to send usual envoys his country would be invaded. In 1663 A.D. Chakradhwaj Sinha sent his envoys announcing his succession to the Ahom throne and demanding the extradition of the Marangi Khowa Gohain who had fled to Kachar during Mir Jumla's invasion. This request was refused by Bir Darpa who allowed the Ahom invasion to depart unaccompanied by one of his own. But when the king Chakradhwaj defeated the Muhammedans in 1667 A.D., Bir Darpa sent envoys with complimentary messages and friendly relations were thus restored.[23]

To have a correct appraisal on the socio-political life of the Kacharis some excerpts from Dr. S.K. Bhuyan's (edited) "Kachari Buranji" (1951) are incorporated here.

"The Kacharis who have been described as the 'original autochthanes of Assam' had built up political and administrative units vestiges of which have lingered till this day. Captain Fisher, the first Superintendent of Cachar (British regime), who took great pains in ascertaining the early history of the Kacharis, was of opinion that this rude tribe gradually acquired an empire over Assam, Sylhet, Mymensing and the

valleys to the east of the Brahmaputra, their original seat being at Kamrup; and that their rule ultimately embraced everything from Kamrup down to the sea. They build brick cities, and it is supported that the Tipperah Raja was a younger son of the house, the original empire being divided into a northern and southern part.' Sir Edward Gait is of opinion that the Kacharis are believed to be very closely allied to the Koches, and also, so far at least as language is concerned, to the Chutiyas, Lalungs and Morans of the Brahmaputra valley, and to the Garos and Tipperas of southern hills. Having regard to their wide distribution, and to the extent of country over which Bodo languages of a very uniform type are still current, it seems not improbable that at one time the major part of Assam and North-East Bengal formed a great Bodo Kingdom, and that some, at least, of the Mlechcha kings mentioned in old copper-plate inscriptions belonged to the Kachari or some closely allied tribe.

"It is evident that Kachari or Bodo sovereignty was exercised in Assam in different ages, in different names and in different places. Finally indeed it is only in Cachar that the Kacharis experimented the arduous task of state building; whereas in fact the Kacharis are scattered all over the Brahmaputra valley in addition to their settlement in Cachar. In every district of the Brahmaputra valley we have a number of Kachari villages, and the Kacharis speak the Assamese language with their Assamese neighbours and the Kachari or Bodo language

with their clansfolk. Kacharis appear under different names in the districts of Northern and Eastern Bengal, and a strain of Kachari blood may be traced and detected in quarters which have passed off as pure "Aryan". In addition to the Kacharis proper Mr. Endle has classed the following tribes of Assam within the fold of great Bodo race - Rabha, Mech, Dhimal, Koch, Solanimiyas, Mahaliyas, Phulgurias, Saraniyas, Dimasas, Hajais, Lalungs, Garos, Hajongs. In addition the Morans and the Chutiyas of upper Assam are closely akin to the Kachari race.

"The bonds of union among the Kacharis whether living in Cachar or outside the district are community of blood and language as well as of religious rites and customs. There is no record of any attempt to fuse the scattered Kacharis into one political unit; and in fact such an attempt would be unpractical as they lived under monarchs of different races, on a pan-Kachari movement would have at once brought the scattered remnants of the tribe in conflict with their territorial loyalty. The Kacharis living in Upper Assam could never dream of transferring their allegiance from the Ahom monarch to the Kachari king at Dimapur or Khaspur, though the latter belonged to their own tribe.

"The Kacharies have left indelible traces of their civilization in different parts of Assam. The ruins of Dimapur and the rock-cut temple at Maibang bear testimony to their attainments in sculpture, architecture and engineering.

"The names of Assam rivers with the prefix Di point to

the fact that the Kacharis had lived almost in every place in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Kacharis had at one time advanced as far as Kaliabar. The great Assamese reformer Sankar Deva (1449-1568 A.D.) had to leave his ancestral home at Bordowa owing to the pressure of the Kacharis. After the expulsion of the Kacharis the area between Raha and Kaliabar was found depopulated and in places thinly peopled owing to the flight of villagers during the period of confusion of war. King Pratap Singha deputed Momai-Tamuli Barbaruah to reconstruct this area. The Barbaruah established new villages, or resettled them with the repatriated fugitives. This new settlement was therefore called Na-gaon or a new village settlement, a name still adopted to designate the district.

"A very interesting question arises with regard to the Sadiya (Eastern) Kacharis : Where were the Chutias (Chutia domination also was identified along Sadiya) when the Kacharis exercised their domination at Sadiya? The Chutias and the Kacharis both believed to have derived their sovereign power from the magic potency of a golden cat, Kuber, the Hindu god of Wealth was tutelary god of the Chutias. The same god occupies a prominent place in the Kachari pantheon. The divinity is worshipped by the Kacharis in two forms, masculine and feminine, Kuber brai and Kuber brui. The Kacharis of Cachar have continued their worship of the Kechai-Khati Gosani of Sadiya. At the same time the Chutia rulers traced their descent from Raja Bhismak, father of Rukmini, consort of Srikrishna; and the Kacharis, at least the southern branch,

from Bhima (Pandava prince) and Heramba Rakshasi. The question whether the two Sadiya states are run by the Kacharis and other by Chutias, were co-extensive, contemporaneous, identical or successive is yet left to be solved."[24]

Subordination of the Bara Bhuyans

According to prevalent traditions in Assam valley the Bhuyans who were ruling north of the Brahmaputra and east of the Chutiya kingdom at the time of the advent of Ahoms in the upper Brahmaputra valley claimed to be descendant of Samudra.* Samudra had two grandsons, Santanu and Samanta. Each of these two said to have become the father of twelve children. Santanu's twelve sons occupied the district of modern Nowgong - south of the Brahmaputra. Samanta's twelve sons on the other hand came to occupy Lakhimpur district - north of the Brahmaputra and both these sets came to be known as Twelve Bhuyans.[25]

The Bhuyans were petty chiefs exercising practically regal authority over small tracts. When the central authority of the Kamarup kings was strong, these Bhuyans were feudal lords over Vishayas or districts. When this central authority grew weaker the Bhuyans became the rulers. Though the Bhuyans were independent of each other yet usually some of them within a specified area always combined to form a confederacy and the leader of such confederacy was known as Gamath.

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* It is difficult to correctly identify who was Samudra.

When a common enemy appeared before them all the Bhuyan chiefs joined their forces.[26]

The Bhuyans of western Assam clashed with the expanding kingdom of the Koch king Biswa Singh who finally dealt a death blow to the power of these Bhuyans living in western and central Assam. The Ahom king Sukhapha confronted the Bhuyans in upper and eastern Assam. Though no detailed accounts about the open confrontation of Bhuyans and Ahoms are found, yet it is clear that these Bhuyans submitted to Ahom king Sukapha. When the Ahoms established suzerainty in the whole of Assam, the Bhuyan chiefs fought with the Ahoms with invading armies of the Muslims.[27]

Ahoms and Frontier Rajas of South Kamarup

While the Ahoms expanded their hold in the present district of Kamrup, they came into contact with ten original petty chiefs each of whom possessed a very small armed forces. As these Rajas were exposed to the Muslim invasions from the west finally they accepted the overlordship of the powerful Ahoms and the Ahom kings used them as duars or frontier gates with the responsibility of maintaining vigilance against the invading enemies. These Rajas are found mentioned as under.*

Bholagaon - Situated at the east of Barduar. The Raja was a Mecch.

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* The other duaria Rajas (frontier kings) as found mentioned in some accounts are: Gobha, Salmara, Tetelia, Kuki, Chhaygoan, Bhurbandha, Hengarabaria, Chamaria, Panbari.

Barduar - The Raja was Garo and lived in Bhogpur, two days journey south-west of Guwahati. Kukuriya was the market place of the territory.

Mairapur - Situated between Bholagaon and Barduar.

Lukiduar - This territory led west from Guwahati on the Kailasi river and was larger than that of any former Rajas. This Raja usurped the Chamoria Raja. Originally the Raja was Garo but later on got converted into Hinduism.

Pantan - Belonged to the same family of the Raja of Lukiduar - having their territory attached to Bongaon-Lukiduar.

Bagaduar - South of Pantan, the chief was a Garo.

Beltola - Same family of the Raja of Darrang (northern part of Brahmaputra) claimed to have belonged to the Koch dynasty.

Dimuria - Covered beyond Beltola towards the Garo hills bordering Jaintia and Koch Hajo.

Raniduar - Bordering Borduar Beltola, Jaintia and Khasi hills.[28]

In the Revenue Proceedings No. 35, Bengal, 2 August 1836 we find some more informations about the nine Duaria Rajas of the southern frontier zillah of Kamrup. I find it to be worth to quote the proceedings here.

"List of Nine Dooars or Pass Tracts on the southern frontier Zillah Kamroop. (Revenue Proceedings, Bengal, 2 August, 1836, No. 35.)

Nos.	Names of Dooars	Remarks
1.	Mowrapoor	In 1824 Rajah Sadoo Sing a Casheeah was appointed by Mr. Scott. He continued till 1827, when having failed to pay the Jumma 500 Narainy Rupees and 40 Coolies per annum he was removed and a Bengalee named Oomesh Chunder appointed on a lease of 3 years who held it to 1831 when Ballit Sing, an Assamese, who was Rajah under the Burmese, was appointed and has remained in-charge ever since. He is an Assamese of the Dooars. Except Sadoo Sing no Casheeah has held this Dooar these 50 years.
2.	Bholagong	Rajah Anil Sing an Assamese of the Dooar was found in-charge in 1824. He was confirmed and retained charge till 1829, when he also fell into arrears, Jumma 500 Narainy Rupees gradually increased to 1828 and 20 Coolies and was displaced. Oomesh Chunder succeeding him with a 3 years lease and assessment 1270 Narainy Rupees. On the lease expiring his brother Gooroodoss succeeded and is still in-charge. No Casheeah had had charge of this place for 60 or 70 years at least.

Nos.	Names of Dooars	Remarks
3.	Burdooar	This Dooar was in 1824 found to be in-charge of Rajah Chutter Sing, a Casheeah of Nunklow; Jumma Narainy Rupees 500 and 80 Coolies. He continued till 1826, when he died, and Teerut Sing succeeded; Jumma 2250 Narainy Rupees and 80 Coolies, he remained till 1829, when Teerut Sing having rebelled headed and insurrection in the Casheeah Hills and murdered several Europeans and a number of Natives; the Dooar was held Khas and Muhadur Burrooa an Assamese of rank appointed Manager for 1829; in 1830 and 1831 Mirza Bundee Allee held it, Jumma 2635; and for 1832 and 1833, Muhadur Burrooa was again appointed, Jumma 2,725, Narainy Rupees and Coolies as before. In 1834, the settlement was made with a boy named Rujan Sing, Rajah of Nunklow, successor to Teerut Sing, and has since, continued; the Jumma having been increased by me to its present amount.
4.	Pantan	In 1824 Rajah Lalchand, a Casheeah of the Dooar, appointed by the Burmese was found in-charge and had been so for a few years. He continued till 1826, when he died and

Nos.	Names of Dooars	Remarks
		Jubber Sing, a relation, succeeded; Jumma 1,000 Narainy Rupees and 40 Coolies. He held it till 1829, when having joined the Casheeah insurgents he was proclaimed a rebel and the Dooar held khas under Muhadur Burrooa, who retained it till his death in 1834, when it having been ruined by Casheeah inroad and inundations, his son Gungaram Burooa obtained a lease of it for 5 years on its present Jumma. For 30 or 40 years before the Burmese invasion this was held by Assamese Rajash. N.B. Jubber Sing afterwards made submission was restored to his Hill territory in 1829, and (in) 1830 was murdered soon afterwards by his brother who headed the second insurrection in 1831.
5.	Chhuygong	An Assamese Rajah of the Dooar named Nayan Sing was found in-charge on our entering Assam, and had been so from the days of the Assam Rajah's; Jumma Narainy Rupees 700 and 30 Coolies afterwards increased to 1,000 Rupees. He held charge till his death in 1833, when no relations turning up to succeed Jaynarain, a half Bengallee

Nos.	Names of Dooars	Remarks
		and half Assamese, got charge for one year and in 1835, Moorareekanth Rajkhawa an Assamese was appointed on the present Jumma and is still in possession. No Casheeah has had charge of this Dooar for at least 30 years.
6.	Bogoyee	Rajah Koondah Singh, an Assamese of the Dooar, was in-charge before and during the Burmese invasion and continued till 1827, Jumma 800 Narainy Rupees and 20 Coolies; having fallen greatly into arrears an Assamese named Beejoyram, late Chowdree of Baroontee, paid up the balances and got charge; he resigned in 1828 and Muhadutto Sing, Rajah of Lookee, succeeded and held it till 1834 (Jumma the same) when he resigned and Govindram Burrooah succeeded for one year and Jumma Furruckabad Rupees 1211.11—On its expiration Rujun Sing, Rajah of Burdooar and Nunklow, got charge on the present assessment. This Dooar has not been under a Casheeah Rajah for 60 years; the family of Roopnarain and Muhudutto Sing have rented for all that time.

Nos.	Names of Dooars	Remarks
7.	Boko	In 1824 Roopnarain Sing, an Assamese, was the Rajah in-charge, having succeeded his father who had been so from the Assam Rajahs time; he continued with only a slight suspension till his death 1834, Jumma 1,000 Narainy Rupees and 20 Coolies; a Casneeah named Ooroo was then appointed and is still in-charge prior to this no Casheeah had been placed over it for 50 or 60 years.
8.	Bongong	Rajah Roopnarain Sing obtained charge in 1824; he has also had it under the Burmese. He remained till his death in 1831—Jumma 2450 Narainy Rupees and 20 Coolies. Anil Sing of Bholagong succeeded, but being incompetent and having fallen into arrears Ronaram Burrooah, an Assamese, got charge and still holds it, on present assessment. This Dooar was in Roopnarains family now extinct for about half a century—except the three last years of the Burmese rule when a Casheeah named Obeiah Sing held it; but he disappeared on our entering Assam and the old Rajah was appointed.

Nos.	Names of Dooars	Remarks
9.	Looke	This Dooar was in 1824 and 1825 held khas. It was then put under Sing Dutto,an Assamese, who together with his father had been the Rajahs under the Burmese and Assam Governments, Jumma 4,428 Narainy Rupees, and 30 Coolies. On his death (in) 1830, his brother Mohadutto Sing was appointed Rajah, Jumma the same; he has continued in-charge ever since. Some 50 years ago this family were Casheeah's, but then became Hindoos and have managed this Dooar from time immemorial.

(Signed) A. BOGLE
Acting Collector

/ True Copy /

(Signed) F. JENKINS
Agent to the Governor-General.

Ahom and Kamata

During the reign of Sukhangpha, the great-grandson of Sukapha, the Ahoms pushed so far to the west as to come into conflict with the Raja of Kamata who then ruled over the western part of the old kingdom of Kamarupa. The Ahom king

Sukhangpha made war against the Kamata king towards the end of the 13th century. Hostilities continued for several years. At length the Raja of Kamata was obliged to sue for peace which he did by giving his sister named Rajani to the Ahom king. Sukhangpha had by this princess, a son named Chao Pulii.[29]

The time of the Kamata king came to an end after the sack of Kamatapur, by the Muslim invaders towards the end of the 15th century. The Bhuyan chiefs with the support of the Ahom king within a few years' time destroyed the Muslim garrison. After this the Koch king Biswa Singh ascended the throne in about 1515 A.D. defeating the Bhuyan chiefs. Subsequently he shifted his capital from Kamatapur to Koch Behar.[30]

Ahom-Koch Relationship

The Koch kingdom founded by Raja Biswa Singh expanded from river Karatoya to river Barnadi in 1515 A.D. Biswa Singh undertook an invasion of Ahom territory, but had to retreat owing to the hardships experienced during the journey and the great difficulty of obtaining supplies.[31]

After Biswa Singh, Nar Narayan ascended the Koch throne. Soon conflict started with the Ahoms. A petty chieftain conspired against Nar Narayan and on detecting fled to the Ahom king Suklenmung who gave him shelter and with his support made an unsuccessful attack on the Koch king. In 1546 A.D. Sukladhwaj, the brother and General of Nar Narayan, invaded the north of the river Brahmaputra as far as Dikrai river, where

a battle took place. The Koches who were armed with bows and arrows, succeeded in killing some of the Ahom leaders, whereupon the common soldiers fled and were pursued by Koch army. Thousands of Ahom soldiers were slaughtered. A less decisive action was fought upon afterwards at Kaliabar, on the southern side of the Brahmaputra. The Ahoms subsequently took up a position at Saba but were attacked by the Koches with great loss.[32]

In course of these operations, the Koches constructed an embankment road from their capital in Koch Behar to Narayanpur a distance of 350 miles. They also constructed a powerful fort at Narayanpur. In order to neutralize the advantage of the Koches the Ahom king entrenched himself on the bank of Pichala river and thus cut off their supplies and forced them to assume the offensive. The result was a disastrous defeat of the Koches.[33]

Hostilities between the two started again in 1562 A.D. when the Koch army devastated some villages inside Ahom frontier in course of their invasion of Kachari country. In the mouth of the Dikhosi river an engagement took place in which the Ahom worsted. Finally the Koches entered Ahom capital Gargaon in triumph. Some months later, Ahom Raja sued for terms and peace was concluded under conditions: (i) Ahom acknowledgement of the Koch suzerainty, (ii) delivery of a number of sons of the chief nobles as hostages in court of the Koches, (iii) payment of a war indemnity consisting of

60 elephants, 60 pieces of cloth and a quantity of gold and silver.[34]

Before his death in 1584 Raja Nar Narayan partitioned the kingdom in between his son and his brother's son Raghu Dev. Since then the Koch kingdom became Koch Bihar and Koch Hajo - river Sankash being the dividing line. Koch Hajo consisted of Mangaldoi sub-division, Kamarupa and Goalpara district of present Assam. Both the kingdoms soon entered into disputes which became advantageous to the Mughal imperialists who had extended their domain upto Bengal. Both the kings sought friendship with the Ahoms. Finally Ahom sympathy ran to their neighbour Koch Hajo ruled by Parikshit. His rival Lakshmi Narayan king of Koch Behar sought the help of the Mughals and invited the latter to defeat and destroy Parikshit. Parikshit asked for help from the Ahoms in this distressful condition. But when the Ahom insisted on the merger of Koch Army with the Ahom force, Parikshit decided to fight alone and finally perished. After this Parikshit's brother Balinarayan had fled to the Ahom king who gave him shelter. This and other causes of offence led the Governor of Bengal to decide on the invasion of the Ahom country.[35]

Surrender of Dhekari Raja

In January 1563 the Dhekari Raja whose territory was somewhere in Mangaldai and Nowgong Chapari attacked the Ahom territory accompanied by the Ahom Deka Raja who had rebelled against the Ahom king and went to the Dhekari Raja for protec-

tion. In the battle of Murabhanga the Dhekari Raja was defeated and he fled in a boat leaving his elephants and other war weapons to be captured by the Ahoms. Thousands were killed and the heads of slain piled up in heaps at Kahikuchi and Narayanpur to terrorise the people. One son of the Deka Raja was taken prisoner and put to death in about 1565. The Dhekari Raja sent two messengers - Shri Bhuvan Guru and Shrishul Laskar - with offer of his sister Chandkala to Swargadeo as a gesture of good friendship. The Ahom king agreed to accept this offer and he sent two elephants and two horses to the Dhekari Raja.[36]

During the reign of the Swargadeo Pratap Singh, most of the Rajas on the frontier surrendered. The Dhekari Raja also took the line and surrendered before him unconditionally.[37]

Ahom-Jayantia Relations

The dominions of the rajas of Jayantia included two entirely distinct tracts of country, namely, the Jayantia hills and the plains of these hills on the north of Barak river in present Sylhet district now known as Jayantia parganas. As the Jayantia kings did not maintain written records, it has been difficult to determine the founder of this dynasty. From the records of the neighbouring kingdoms of Ahoms and Kacharis it is gathered that one Parbat Ray (Lord of Mountain) united the Jayantias and established a kingdom.[*38]

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* Dr.S.K. Bhuyan (ed. Jayantia Buranji - Introduction, p. 1) writes that -

"The kingdom Jayantia included the Jayantia Hills and

In the month of Dinkao (Sravan) on the day of Khutmit (about 1655 A.D.) during the reign of Chutanila (Jayadhwaj Singh) some Jayantia envoys called on him to pay homage. The Jayantia guests paid homage to the Ahom king by offering many large boats, eight gold seats and one hundred and fifty umbrellas. They implored before the king that the Jayantias ceded to the Ahom king a great part of their dominion, namely, the provinces of Dimarua, Kupahnali and Kaoban. They now prayed the heavenly king to be pleased to return these provinces back to the Jayantias. The Ahom king said in reply that the said provinces were merged in his country and were distributed among the chiefs. So it would not be possible to return them now. Further the Ahom king told the guests to take some gold and go back to their country.[39]

During the reign of Jayantia Raja, Jasamanta Ray (1647-1697 A.D.) the Jayantia king sent an envoy for opening friendly relations. But this relation did not last long. A subject of Ahoms who had been granted permission to go to the Jayantia

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(Footnote from p. 55 continued)

'a plains country to the south of these hills extending as far as Surma river. The former was the ancestral home of the Jayantia Kings and the plains country was annexed at a later period. But it was the latter tract which was first known as Jayantia and which mentioned in the Pauranik literature as reputed for its shrine of Jayanti Devi.

There is a tradition that in very ancient times Jayantia was ruled by a dynasty of Brahmanical rulers, the last four of whom were Kedareswar Rai, Dhaneswar Rai, Kandaya Rai and Jayantia Rai. Jayantia is supposed to be a "female kingdom" which is mentioned in the Mahabharata and against which Arjuna is supposed to have fought."

frontier for trading purposes was seized under Jasamanta's order for some reasons. He was subsequently released but his property was not returned and this led to reprisals. The passes were closed, some Jayantia traders at Sonapur were made prisoners and nine years passed before the quarrel was amicably settled.[40]

Ahom king Rudra Singha became terribly upset against the Kachari king when the latter, by sending an envoy, requested the Ahom king to restore some territory from the Ahom kingdom to the Kacharis claiming that it was formerly a part of Ahom Kachari kingdom. Rudra Singha sent a powerful army to invade the Kachari kingdom. Ahom army captured Demera and Maibong, the capital of Kachari king. The Kachari king fled and escaped into Jayantia. Ahom General sent a request to the Jayantia king to deliver the Kachari Raja but the Jayantia Raja refused to comply. Due to the serious illness of the Ahom General the expedition could not continue to the Jayantia territory in that year. But a year after the Ahom king sent another expedition to Jayantia. After making a two-pronged attack, the Ahom army arrived at Jayantapur, Ramshingha the chief of Jayantia offered his submission to the Ahom General, Barbaruah, and sent the Kachari Raja to the Ahom Swargadeo. The Ahom General, by making a strategum, arrested the Jayantia king and his eldest son and brought them to Rangpur, the Jayantia Raja soon suffered from serious ailment, died at the place Janakhana that was allotted to him for his residence.

Two years after, the Ahom king went down to Saraihtoli and placed the Barkonwanr (the eldest son of Ramsingha) or the crown prince on the masnad of Jayantia. The new Raja agreed to the annual offering of tribute to the Swargadeo.[41]

Socio-Political Survey

The period from the 13th to the 16th century saw the emergence and development of a large number of tribal political formation in northeast India. The Chutiya, the Tai-Ahom, the Koch, Kachari (Dimasa) Tripuri, Manipuri (Meitheli), the Khasi (Khyriem) and Jayantia (Bnar) all these tribes crystalised into rudimentary state formations by the 15th century.[42]

The most developed of the tribes in the 15th century were the Chutias. Their kingdom was annexed and absorbed by the Ahoms by 1523.[*43]

In the 13th century, the Indo-Aryan culture still dominated the lives of the major section of the population in the central plains of the Brahmaputra Valley. The fragments of this culture were holding by the Bhuyan chieftains, ancestors of whom were the migrant adventurers from north India.

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* A number of Brahmin families and artisans like blacksmiths were taken from Chutiya territory of Sadia to Ahom Capital. This indicates the comparative advancement of Chutias. Probably the Brahmanical influence in Ahom society made its beginning earlier to this campaign and realizing the worth of Brahmanical intellectualism Ahoms were keen to increase their population for their political use. Realizing the importance of intermixing of Ahoms with the Chutias, many Ahom families were sent to the Chutia land for permanent settlement by intermixing with them. Ahoms realized that military occupation alone could not hold their sway unless backed by cultural and popular intermixing.

Numbers of feudal holdings of Bhuyan confederated to stand against any powerful adversaries. This confederation was known as Bara Bhuyans. Their absorption under Ahom political system helped in Indianizing process of Ahom culture to a great extent.[44]

Along with the Chutias, Ahoms assimilated some of the Nagas, Morans, Barahis, Kacharis and many plains tribes. Most of the non-Ahom tribes engaged in shifting cultivation considered as culturally inferior to Ahoms termed as Kha (meaning slave) were granted permission to freely adopt the Tai-Ahom culture. There are evidences in the Buranjis that many Kha families were ceremonially adopted into various Ahom clans. Besides, the Ahoms were not endogamous. The liberal matrimony they practised outside the limits of their own respective exogamous clans helped the assimilation process. Instead of worshipping images, they made offerings to spirits and deities presiding over their households, rice fields, forests and rivers. In major worships they sacrificed cows and buffaloes and in minor ones fowl and pigs. The process of Ahomization followed by Hinduization - the latter process involving a whole package of changes in the matter of language, mode of dwelling, food habits and agricultural techniques, etc.[45]

Sukapha with band of Ahom migrants entered Upper Assam in 1228 A.D. with a view to permanently settling there. For years the community went on moving from place to place as a self governed body of armed peasants in search of suitable site.

In course of their journey they left behind some small colonies at strategic places like Khamjang and Tipam. But after their temporary experimental stays at several sites, the main body finally settled by 1253 in the fertile Dikhou Valley, now forming the Sibsagar district. Sukapha chose this tract primarily because he found the hill streams there extremely rich with silt. Its proximity to the Naga Hills range forming natural rampart was another decisive factor. It facilitated not only defence gravitational irrigation but also raids for slaves into those hills. Easy access to sites of salt-wells and iron ores was yet another advantage of the locality. The first Ahom Capital was established on a low hillock Charaideo. Though abandoned in 1397 for a new Capital at Chargua - and later at Gargaon in mid-16th century, Charaideo remained sacred place for the Ahoms till the end of their regime. The landscape there is still dotted with ruins of the tumuli in which deceased monarchs, their queens and important nobles used to be entombed.[46]

Due to the lack of acceptable candidates for the throne following the sudden deaths of its occupants, interregnums used to prevail. Three interregnums covering the period of 1364-69, 1376-80 and 1389-97, came in quick succession. On one occasion, the royal vacancy was filled in only after the king-elect and the nobles could be forced by the people to enter into a social contract. The king pledged never to become an oppressor like his predecessors and the people in their turn, promised never

again to raise a revolt. The last of the interregnum was proceeded by a regicide in the year 1389. The assassinated king has been charged of interfering with customary land distributions and of seizing women and properties for presentation to his favourites. There is also instance of keeping a Buragohain's office vacant for several years when the Buragohain absconded. All these details of the socio-political reality suggest, on the one hand that the people could long manage without a king or an important nobility because authority was widely diffused; and on the other, that contradictions and tensions were also mounting by then within the embryonic Tai-Ahom polity.[47]

In the reign of Sudangpha Bamuni Konwar (1397-1407) Brahmanical impact on the Ahom political system made an effective beginning. Sudangpha's mother was a Ahom queen who was banished by the king when she was holding a prince in her womb. She was given shelter by a Brahmin of Habung in whose house Sudangpha was born. The prince was brought up incognito and after the crisis of 1389 when a big hunt was made to find out a prince from Ahom royal family, Sudangpha was discovered and was elected king at the age of 15. He made his god father Brahmin of Habung a confidential adviser. Habung was an ancient Brahman settlement situated near the mouth of Dihing river. Sudangpha's choice of new capital at Chargua on the Dihing, his setting up of Habung Brahmins' colony near his capital and his giving posts of importance to his Brahmin

benefactor's sons on the frontier were significant. He was instrumental for introducing several Hindu rites, alongside of the traditional Ahom ones at royal ceremonies like coronation. With his Brahmin intrusion, the political authority remained no longer exactly identical with the armed Ahom populace in its totality or the tribal council representing it. There was a cleavage. This brought the highly developed social organization to the threshold of statehood.[48]

From the relevant scanty and conflicting details as documented in the chronicles it appears that a dispute arose in 1493 between the Chief of a village of Tai-Turung clan and the king over certain customary rights. Like the other Ahoms, the Tai-Turung people, too, used to periodically contribute their free labour towards the repair of the royal pile-house and work in his rice fields. In this connection, once the Tai-Turung people were charged of theft of grain from the royal granary and were heavily fined. This antagonized them. When they were called up again to repair the royal pile-house, the Tai-Turung Chief and his clansmen used the opportunity to spear the king to death in his own house. For committing regicide, the said chief was later executed; and his clansmen and slaves were ejected from their village and resettled in a different locality. The Burhagohain suspected of complicity was also dismissed by the deceased king's son and successor.[49]

Another important event of worth mentioning was of carrying out a state-wise census of the adult population in

1510 by Suhumung Dihingia Raja. A survey of clans and crafts was also made to specify the nature of their respective militia duties. His involvement in frequent warfares and the need, accordingly, for maximum mobilization of the paiks warranted this step.[50]

As the scale of social, military and political action went on expanding, the militia could no longer remain what it originally was. The defeat at the hands of Koch army in 1562 was an eye-opener. During the 17th century, the domains of Kamrup and Darrang and several petty chiefdoms of the hilly frontiers were wrested from the Mughals and their allies - the Koches. This expansion into lower Brahmaputra valley and continuation of hostilities with the Mughals till 1681 could not but lead to further sophistication of the Ahom state structure. From the reign of Susengpha Pratap Sing (1603-41), Ahom diplomats were almost totally replaced by Brahmins in the diplomatic missions sent abroad. This was done with a view to making diplomacy more efficient. The Ahom kings also began to assume Hindu names in addition to their Tai patronymics. It was from the days of Pratap Singh again that they started patronizing Hindu temples with land grants. Their formal conversion to Hinduism did not however take place before 1648 and the new attachment became stable only towards the end of the century. Having struck its roots first in lower Assam, the neo-Vaishnavite movement of Shankaradeva (1449-1568) became widespread later also in upper Assam despite intermittent

official persecution. It became an agency of gradual social transformation of the Ahoms and tribal peoples from animism to Hinduism; from pile-house dwelling to mud-plinth-house dwelling, from the practice of burial of the dead to cremation; from language Tai and tribal to Assamese.[51]

Notes

1. G.C. Baruah. Ahom Buranji, p. 44.
2. Ibid., p. 45.
3. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Deodhai Asam Buranji, p. 8; and Arunoday, August 1850, p. 59; August 1852, p. 124.
4. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Deodhai Asam Buranji, p. 34.
5. Ibid., p. 42.
6. Dr. H.K. Barpujari. Problems of the Hill Tribes, North East Frontier 1822-42, p. 3.
7. L.W. Shakespear. History of Upper Assam and North-Eastern Frontier, pp. 195-210.
8. K.L. Baruah. The Early History of Kamrup, p. 270.
9. G.C. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 54-56.
   Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Deodhai Asam Buranji, pp. 54-56.
   K.L. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 270-275.
10. G.C. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 54-64.
    K.L. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 270-276.
    Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Deodhai Asam Buranji, pp. 16-19, 22, 24-25, 50.
11. E.A. Gait. History of Assam, pp. 80-81.
12. Ibid., p. 80.
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CHAPTER IV

PRE-MUGHAL EXPEDITIONS AND IMPORTANT BATTLES

Like all other parts of India Assam also used to draw the attention of the Delhi Emperors right from the Sultanate period. As many as nine important military expeditions can be traced from historical records sent against Assam from the time of Sultan of Ghor to the end of the Lody dynasty. Indeed none of these attempted invasions won success despite heavy engagement of men, money and material. But these military contacts with the remote part of the country linked up the Assamese with the rest of India.

First Muslim Expedition

Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji, the most able Turkish General of Sultan Kutbuddin invaded Bihar in 1195 A.D. He advanced to Banga and by a surprise attack captured Lakhnauti after making the Rai Lakhmaniya into flight (1198 A.D.), he established his seat of government in Lakhnauti after destroying the old capital Nudiya. Gradually he brought the surrounding places under his political domination. He collected information about the territory of Tibet in the east and entertained a desire to conquer it. Accordingly he raised an army of 10,000 horses. The preliminary study of the region revealed that the passage to Tibet hid through the tributaries

of three races i.e. Koch, Mech, Tiharu and the kingdom of Kamarup. He converted one of the Mech chieftains into Muhammadanism and called him 'Ali Mech' who offered Bakhtiyar to guide him on his advance through the difficult hilly terrain. After crossing the river Karotaya (1205 A.D.) and Teesta, Bakhtiyar came to the bank of a big river "the length, breadth and depth of which was three times greater than river Ganga". After marching ten days along the upper course as led by Ali Mech they came across a bridge that had stood over the water having about twenty arches of stones. Bakhtiyar posted on the bridge two officers - a Turk and the other a Khilji with a large force to secure the place till his return. With the remainder of the army he crossed the river and started marching ahead. Ali Mech returned after this point. The Raja of Kamrup through his intelligence service tried to persuade Bakhtiyar to withdraw from his attempted venture but was not successful. Bakhtiyar proceeded ahead with his project. After marching a few stages through the defiles and mountains he confronted a horde of horsemen looked like Turks or Mongols when Bakhtiyar attacked a fort in a village. The fight raged from morning till evening. Large number of his troops were slain and wounded. From questioning to the prisoners he could come to know that after a few days march they would be reaching a place with three hundred and fifty thousand strong men armed with bows. Bakhtiyar, after making an assessment of the situation, found that his men were tired and exhausted, many were wounded and slain and after consulta-

tion with the nobles decided to retreat.[1]

The retreat was disastrous. The local people moved out from the line of march and had burnt everything. After 15 days of privation Bakhtiyar descended from the mountains into the country of Kamrup and reached the bridge. The guards whom he left there deserted their post after making a quarrel in between them. The bridge was found to be completely destroyed. There was no other means to cross the river.[2]

Seeing a lofty temple of magnificent structure in the vicinity, Bakhtiyar took shelter in it for the night. The Raja of Kamrup Niladhwaj was making a trap to destroy the Muslim intruders. He issued orders to all the people of his territory to come up, levy after levy. Then they struck their bamboo spears on the ground surrounding the temple and planted them together as wall. Realizing the danger of this trap, the Muslims by making a concentrated move to a particular point opened up a passage for them through the dangerous obstacles. They hastened to the river. Most Musalmans perished, only Bakhtiyar and a few horsemen reached the other bank. Some of the Muslim soldiers were imprisoned and subsequently rehabilitated according to their wish in Kamrup. They were allowed to retain their religion and customs by showing a secular gesture by the king and the people. These Muslims were called Goria since they came from the country of Gaud i.e. Bengal. Now-a-days also Muslims of Assam are known as Goria.[3]

<u>Second Muslim Expedition</u>

A brief mention has been made in the Tabakat-i-Nasiri

that the Bengal Subedar Ghiyasud-din-Auz used to receive offerings from Kamrup and Tirhut. According to Dr. S.K. Bhuyan Ghiyas-ud-din invaded Assam in about 1226/27 A.D. But he was defeated and compelled to return to Gaura. Padmanath Gohain Baruah was of opinion from his historical assessment that Ghiyasuddin invaded Assam in about 1228 A.D. during the days of king Niladhwaj. But the Bengal subedar could collect revenue for a short period only from the vassals of Niladhwaj on the border. In a subsequent account of Tabakat-i-Nasiri it was mentioned that while Ghiyasuddin had gone on an expedition to Bengal and Kamrup and thereby left Lakhnauti undefended, Malik Nasiruddin Ahmed, son of Sultan Shamsuddin, having collected an army in Hindustan marched from Oude to Lakhnauti. Perhaps hearing about the arrival of enemy Ghiyasuddin left his Kamrup expedition uncompleted and hastened back to Lakhnauti. Sir J.N. Sarkar referring to Ghiyasuddin's collection of tributes from Bang, Kamrup and Tirhut as mentioned in Tabakat-i-Nasiri was of opinion that though there was no detailed information regarding the Muslims to these countries yet it could be possible that these countries suffered aggression from the energetic ruler like Ghiyasuddin.[4]

Third Muslim Expedition

Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbeck Tugril Khan, a strong and ambitious ruler of Bengal crossed the river Karotaya, the dividing line of the Muslim territory of Lakhnauti and the country of Kamrup. He advanced by the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra and

was advancing through the present district of Goalpara. This he did in the year (Spring of 1257 A.D.) to conquer and annex the resourceful land of Kamrup to his country. The king of Kamrup did not offer any resistance neither his vassals. The chieftains of Bara Bhuyans stood on the onward march of the Muslim invaders. The king of Kamrup evacuated the capital and had taken shelter somewhere in the hills. The invaders became over-jubilant on their easy victory and celebrated the occasion by erecting a mosque. Though the Sultan was offered by the king's agent an annual tribute yet the Sultan issued coins in his name but all his ambitious plans ultimately ended in a disaster when the Sultan decided to spend the rainy season in the capital of his newly conquered country. It was already harvesting time when the people stored their grains and fodder for the rainy seasons resulting in flood. But the Sultan could not make an assessment about the careful measures to be adopted to meet the coming crucial days. He did not store foodgrains nor fodder. On the other hand, Kamrup king engaged some merchants who bought the surplus grains moving in disguise and exported to neighbouring places. The king from his concealed position from jungle was making all preparations to destroy the invaders with the setting of the monsoon. He constructed some dams on the upper flow of the streams to store water for emergency flooding. Steps were taken to cut off the supply of provisions to the Muslims. All his Hindu people were alerted for an attack at the right hours to annihilate the enemy.[5]

With the onset of rains which continued continuously and incessantly, the Sultan's army faced real problem. Neither food for men, nor drinking water, nor even fodder to beasts were available and the entire area became slushy and muddy. Starvation and disease started taking tolls. Under this pitiful condition the Sultan, with the help of a guide, wanted to return taking shorter route to his country but it was already too late. The Assamese attacked the invaders on all sides and had given a crushing defeat. The Sultan though fought well ultimately wounded and became captive along with his family and children. On his earnest appeal he was allowed to see his youngest son and finally keeping his face on his baby he breathed his last.[6]

Fourth Muslim Expedition

According to 'Alamgirnamah' in 1337 A.D., Delhi monarch Muhammad Shah, son of Tughlug Shah, planned to conquer Tibet first annexing Kamrup. Accordingly he sent a powerful force of 100,000 horses and men fully equipped with arms and stores. But the whole army was perished in that "land of witchcraft" and not a single trace of it was left. He sent a second army to avenge the former disaster but this army also failed to advance to that land beyond the Bengal border.[7]

Fifth Muslim Expedition

According to Sir J.N. Sarkar, "for a century after Yuzbeck's invasion Kamrup was left to itself, but about 758 A.H. (1357 A.D.) it was again invaded by a Muslim army. If

the chronology drawn up by the author of the social history of Kamrup can be relied upon, Indra Narayan was the ruler of Kamata at that time but he possessed neither the material resources nor probably the ability to check the invaders. Repeated attacks of the Ahoms from the east and the Kachari menace from the south of the Brahmaputra had so weakened his authority over his outlying territory that in 1359 A.D., a petty Hindu chief practically set himself up as an independent king in Kamrup. In these favourable circumstances the Muslim army pushed up the Brahmaputra to Kamrup Nagara, and occupied it. The conquest and occupation of this city have been questioned by Stapletan and Baruah, but the mint name of the coin "Chawlistan alias Kamrup" issued by Sultan Sikander unmistakably denotes the occupation of the city and should not be taken to mean the territory east of the Brahmaputra in the Mymensingh district. Such a surmise is not supported by any Persian chronicle or Assamese Buranji. The date of the coin 759 A.H. proves that the conquest and the occupation of the city had taken place previous to this year in (1358 A.D.) Shah's reign for Sikander immediately on his accession had to fight against the Sultan of Delhi."[8]

Sixth Muslim Expedition

According to Buranjis the Ahom king Sudangpha (1397-1407 A.D.) made an expedition against the king of Kamrup-Kamata as the latter had given shelter to an Ahom noble Tao Sulai who raised the standard of rebellion against the Ahom kingdom.

The war between the two neighbouring kingdoms was progressing. The Bengal governor Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam (1389-1409 A.D.) who was contemplating to conquer and annex Assam got a right opportunity to attack Kamata-Kamrup.[9]

The powerful Muslim army crossed the border and entered Assam and won a few easy victories. The Kamata king now facing a double danger concluded a treaty with the Ahom king who was his co-religionist. Now both of them turned against the Muslim invaders. The Muslim army started meeting defeat after defeat before this ally and finally they left the country with heavy loss.[10]

Seventh Muslim Expedition

In the 15th century Kamrup covered an expansive territory comprising portions on the western bank of the river Karotaya which usually used to be the boundary line between Bengal and Assam. The Bengal Sultan Rukunuddin Barak Shah (1457-1474 A.D.) decided to recover this Sis-Karotaya region from Kamrup and then to carry out the expedition to the interior of Assam with the intention of annexing Assam. Accordingly Shah Ismail Ghazi with a powerful force was entrusted with the job. The Kamata kingdom was then in its most flourishing stage and Ismail's progress was severely contested. In a battle fought near river Sankosh he was defeated but subsequently he was successful in winning over the Kamrup Raja by his personal demeanours. This led to a friendly treaty with the Kamrup King. But Sultan Rukunuddin

suspected this treaty to be an offensive and defensive alliance with Kamrup with the objective of setting up an independent kingdom by Ismail Khan. Ismail was captured at the Sultan's behest and later on was beheaded. This ended the seventh Assam campaign of the Muslims.[11]

Eighth Muslim Expedition

Sultan Allauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1519 A.D.), after consolidating his position in Bengal, turned to the North-east frontier, i.e. towards Kamrup. Kamrup was ruled at that time by the king Nilambar who extended his dominion to the Barnadi river in the east. In 1498 A.D. Hussain launched a vigorous campaign with a view to recover the lost territory and to put a permanent stop to aggression of the Kamrup king. He entered Assam with 20,000 foot and horses and numerous boats. Hussain defeated the Kamrup King, destroyed the capital city and permanently annexed the country. The Kamrup King was captured and Hussain leaving his son to rule the newly conquered country left for Bengal along with Kamrup King. But the Kamrup King managed to escape from his imprisonment and permanently disappeared into the hills.[12]

According to Shihabuddin Talish this eastwards advance of the Afghans along the Brahmaputra consisted of 24,000 soldiers and a powerful fleet. The Buranjis also support that a large force attacked the Ahom Kingdom. The Ahoms made a strategic withdrawal to the hills thereby allowing the plains to be occupied by the enemies. But the Ahom descended from

the hills in the rainy season, blocked the roads already rendered impossible by the floods and finally surrounded the Muslim army and cut them down to the last man. It was thus an unmitigated disaster, but was limited in its territorial extent, for Bengal's hold on Kamrup remained unaffected.[13]

Ninth Muslim Expedition

Sultan Nusrat Shah (1519-1532 A.D.) after the conclusion of peace with Babur in 1529 A.D. opened a protracted and costly war with the Ahom King of Assam. The Muslims advanced with artillery, infantry and war boats into the Ahom district of Darrang. In a naval engagement fought at Temani, the Muslim force was ultimately defeated and compelled to fall back on Kamrup. In a subsequent land battle at Singri the Muslims were given a crushing defeat forcing them to withdraw from Assam.[14]

After the death of Nusrat next year the Muslims with a determination to take revenge of their earlier defeat, launched an attack on Assam. This time the expedition was led by one Turbak. Turbak had an initial victory over the Ahom in the battle of Sola. But finally he was given a disastrous defeat, in a naval engagement where the Assamese had a definite superiority. Turbak himself fell in the battle and the Ahoms captured a huge booty from the Mughal. The Muslims again had to face frustration from their expedition to Assam. The account of this expedition has been found in the Manuscript of the Deodhai Assam Buranji in minute details.[15]

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CHAPTER V

MUGHAL EXPEDITIONS IN ASSAM: ISLAM KHAN'S ATTEMPT

Emperor Akbar died in 1605 A.D. with Bengal nominally subdued and the kingdom of Koch Bihar and Kamrup practically free from Mughal interference. The task of bringing these territories in eastern India under the complete Mughal sway fell on his son Emperor Jehangir. Jehangir entrusted his Bengal subhedar Islam Khan for the job. The internal dissension of the local rulers presented a golden opportunity to Islam khan to carry out his project.

<u>Internal Dissensions Amongst the Local Rulers</u>

On Nar Narayan's death his son Lakshmi Narayan ascended the throne of the Western Koch Kingdom which included Koch Bihar, parts of Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Rangpur. Raghu Narayan of Koch Hajo i.e. the ruler of Goalpara and Kamrup-Kamata declared himself independent refusing to pay tribute to Lakshmi Narayan. Raghu Narayan died in 1603 A.D. and his son Parikshit succeeded him as the king of Koch Hajo. Like his father he also refused to acknowledge the supremacy of Lakshmi Narayan. Friction between the cousins started increasing. Both the kings sought the help and friendship of the Ahoms. In the year 1608 Parikshit gave his daughter Mangal Dahi in marriage to Pratap Singh, the Ahom king. The

Ahoms, however, were involved in wars with the Kacharis and therefore abstained from interference in Koch affairs.[1]

Meanwhile Lakshmi Narayan turned his attention to the Mughals and in 1596 he had declared himself a vassal of the Mughal empire. In the Akbarnama it is said of him that he had "4,000 horses, 200,000 foot, 700 elephants and 1,000 ships. His country is 200 kos long and from 100 to 40 kos broad, extending in the east to the Brahmaputra, in the north to Tibet and in the south to Ghoraghat and in the west to Tirhut." In 1597 he gave a daughter in marriage to Raja Man Singh, at that time Mughal governor of Bengal. Soon afterwards, the latter sent a detachment into Koch Bihar to protect him.[2]

Friction between the two cousins aggravated further and in 1612 Lakshmi Narayan went in person to Dhaka and begged the Nawab to intervene. The Nawab Islam Khan after becoming free from all expeditions was planning to conquer the north-eastern countries and therefore he was naturally glad of the opportunity when he was requested to intervene by Raja Lakshmi Narayan. He despatched a large army under the leadership of Shaikh Kamal and the guidance of Koch Raja, while the overall command was given to Mukarram Khan. The list of Khans, Mansabdars, officers and other famous warriors who were appointed to proceed with this expedition against Raja Parikshit Narayan was in the following order: Mukarram Khan, his brother Abdus Salam, Shaikh Kamal, Mirza Mirak Ajali and some 22 other

officers of Bihar, Raja Sattrajit, Bahadur Ghazi, Suna Ghazi, Islam Quli and Majlis Byazid with their entire fleet and artillery, one hundred boats of Musa Khan and his brother under command of Admiral Abdul Khan, troops of these officers and four hundred war-boats fully equipped with big cannons. In addition to the elephants of the nobles, five thousand matchlock men, three hundred elephants were also sent to the expedition. A sum of seven hundred thousand rupees was given to the army as expenses.[3]

Padishah Nama mentions the Mughals strength as 6,000 horses, 10,000 to 12,000 foot and 500 boats. This figure certainly refers to the direct imperial force only. With the inclusion of the forces of the accompanying Khans, Mansabdars and the force of Raja Lakshmi Narayan the Muslim had definitely a far superior force both in number and equipment.

It is difficult to ascertain the total numbers of the force engaged by the Koch Hajo Raja as the Mughals historians have not thrown light on the matter as they should have.

Mukarram Khan marched with his force stage by stage from Dhaka both by land and water using the river Brahmaputra and its banks. Finally his army arrived at the vicinity of Salkuna. Under the pretext of an unprovoked attack on the frontier districts of Bahirband and Bhitarband of Koch Bihar by Kamrup (Koch Hajo) Raja Parikshit, Mughal force launched a counter-attack at Salkuna.

First Naval Encounter

Raja Parikshit posted at this place 300 fully equipped war boats under the command of one of his relatives. As soon as the imperial force arrived there, he began to fight, and offered a stubborn resistance. But it was of no avail. The imperialist won victory and Parikshit's fleet suffered a defeat. Numerically superior and better equipped fleets of the Zamindars and of the imperial officers overpowered Parikshit's fleet, seized all his boats and brought them to the imperial officers, excepting the one in which the commander fled with his life.[4]

Mughal Reinforcements

Islam Khan was over-jubilant after hearing this naval victory. He sent 1,000 matchlock men under the command of his brother Shaikh Habibullah to help Mukarram Khan and Shaikh Kamal and other officers in their onward march for further gain. Islam Khan also sent detailed instructions on the battle order and movement to be followed by the Mughal force.[5]

Mughal Security System in Advance

In every station they used to halt for a short period and reconnoitre next halting stage a day previous. Next day they would march out and pitch their camp in that stronghold and strengthen their defences with a strong fortress and a deep trench around and would thus reside there by safely preventing the Assamese of making any night attack. According

to "Padishahnama" every camping ground was protected by a raised enclosure with earth and reeds.

First Attempt on the Dhubri Fort

The fort at Dhubri on the bank of the Brahmaputra was very strongly built up and fortified by Parikshit. This fort stood to be the main hurdle in the defeat of Parikshit and in the farther advance of the Imperial force inside Assam. The Mughals carefully advanced and pitched their camps at a distance of 2 kos* from the fort and became busy in making their plan for the assault. Mukarram Khan in consultation with the highest ranks planned to leave this camp strongly fortified before he made a strong fort nearby Dhubri for the assault. Accordingly a regiment was sent next morning for the project of the advance-fort. But before the strategic scheme was completed Imam Quli and a few other Afghan officers rushed against the fort of Dhubri from the side of the river without any order from Mukarram Khan - the Commander-in-Chief. The news however reached Mukarram Khan and Shaikh Kamal that Quli was engaging in a fierce battle. As it was not expedient to carry on the battle, from tactical points of view so Shaikh Kamal sent a number of imperial officers to call them back from the field of battle in the name of the Emperor.[6]

Failure of Second Attempt

Imperialists now decided that surroundings of the fort first to be cleared of jungles and other obstacles to make it

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* 1 kos = $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

convenient for cavalry movement. While the process of cleaning was going on from morning till evening under the supervision of Shaikh Kamal, he was misguided by Raja Raghunath to make hasty and surprise attack on the fort. Accordingly Shaikh Kamal without scrutinizing the matter ordered the officers to launch the attack in spite of his knowledge that it would not be possible to conquer the fort without proper plan. The Assamese took the full advantage of the situation. From their shut in position within the fort they began to discharge guns, cannons and arrows from the towers of the ramparts of the fort. No sooner had they started than the Shaikh with all his followers fell back from the fort in defeat.[7]

Preparation for the Third Assault

Having failed to capture the fort in first and second attempts due to stubborn resistance of Parikshit's force, vigorous preparation was made by the Mughals for the next attempt. They took up to clear all the jungles around their fort, raised the batteries and ramparts against the wall of the fort, constructed zigzag roads (sabat) covered by double walls for approaching and attacking the fort, constructed 7 rows of glacises (Khakriz) from Sabat to the walls. Responsibility and tasks to be carried out by each regiment were allotted with instruction to be meticulous in its own field of operation. Islam Khan, the governor of Bengal maintained a very close link acquainting himself about the progress of daily preparation for attack, the fort was finally surrounded

by underground trenches and overground commanding points of cannon firing against the fort. During the entire course utmost vigilance was maintained to prevent the Assamese from making night attempts in which they were adept. Every regiment by turn performed the duties of guard day and night with great care.[8]

Finally it was decided that the foremost glacis which was adjacent to the fort was assigned to the charge of Mukarram Khan and Shaikh Kamal. The trench near the aforesaid glacis also remained under their charge. Two other trenches were assigned to Mirza Imam and Mirza Nathan respectively. The heroes of the state spread over to the right and left wing. The sappers and miners (Bildars) were instructed to proceed under protection of the glacis to the ditch of the fort of the enemy and to undermine the wall of the fort. As soon as they would make a breach in the wall all the regiments should rush forward with mighty elephants in their front and thus the victory to be attained.[9]

Capture of Dhubri Fort

The battle started with the cannonades of the Imperialist. From the top of the four battlements, the cannoniers fired their cannons in such a way that it was not possible even for an ant to bring its head out of the tower and wall of the fort. Meanwhile in the afternoon the bildars succeeded in making a hole in the wall through which an elephant could easily pass. All the four regiments except Mukarram Khan

rushed forward with their elephants inside the fort and a terrific battle took place with heavy casualties both sides. Mughals brought their cavalry and heavy artillery inside the fort. Fathe Khan, the Koch commander of the fort put a stiff resistance with his limited resources. But finally he had to give in by withdrawing his forces from the jaws of death. He took to the river to drown himself but when his son was captured he came out of the river for the love of his son and offered himself as a captive. Then the Mughal clarions proclaimed the happy news of victory and the trumpet sounded the happy note of conquest.[10]

Failure of the Peace Initiative

Shaikh Kamal, the Mughal commander, sent an envoy to Raja Parikshit who was at that time at Gilah, his summer capital, a few miles north of Dhubri, with a peace proposal. Though the Kamrup king was preparing for a befitting confrontation against the Mughals yet he expressed his willingness to obey Shaikh but finally Islam Khan turned down the proposal and ordered to kill or capture the Raja in person and annex his kingdom to Mughal empire.[11]

Parikshit's Attempt to Retake Dhubri

After the failure of the peace initiative, Parikshit was working vigorously for reorganizing his force to retake Dhubri from the Mughals who by the meantime fully controlled the ins and outs of Dhubri. In this critical juncture Raja Lakshmi Narayan came from his own territory in accordance with

his previous agreement to help the imperialist and attacked the country of Khuntaghat, a dependency of Raja Parikshit. Raja Parikshit hurried to the place and kept the Raja Lakshmi Narayan at bay for seven days and nights. But when the Mughals with powerful force came to the rescue of Raja Lakshmi Narayan, Raja Parikshit being helpless abandoned the seige and returned to Gilah.[12]

Parikshit's Last Strategy

On the instructions of the imperialist the Zamindars of Bhati proceeded to the mouth of river Gadadhar and constructed fort in that place blocking the passage of the transport of rations to the city of Gilah and thereby annihilate the concentration of the Koch force. Raja Parikshit was put into a difficult situation. Being helpless he prepared himself for the last attempt and decided to carry night attacks to destroy the enemy's blockade. Accordingly he arranged to send all his 700 boats with 50 elephants under the command of his son-in-law Purandar Laskar, Raja of Dumuria, dependency of Parikshit against the sentinal fort on the mouth of the river Gadadhar in the darkness of the night. The Raja personally was to proceed with his whole army against the fort of Dhubri where imperial officers were staying. He started after dusk with a force of one hundred and fifty six thousand Kari paiks (archers), five thousand musketeers and three hundred elephants.[13]

"Raja of Dumuria travelled throughout the night till he

met first of all Sulayman Sardiwal who was on sentry duty with fifty fully equipped war boats before the vans. Sardiwal was attacked by a force of seven hundred bachari i.e. war boats of the Koch. As the heads of the Koch boats were high and the heads of the Bhati boats were low and as the soldiers of the zamindars were quite off their guard, so the attack came on them in such a way that not a single soul of those fifty boats survived. All of them were annihilated by Raja Laskar's fleet. Then they rushed upon the fort. Bahadur Ghazi and other Zamindars who were staying below the fort with two hundred boats and with four hundred musketeers inside the fort, could not get any chance of opposing them. All of them were either killed or captured. The fifty elephants of the Koch which arrived by land finished the affairs of the wounded. After destruction of the fort, Bahadur Ghazi and Sona Ghazi fled half dead with the forty-three boats out of the total strength of two hundred and fifty and came to the imperial officers.[14]

Raja Parikshit marched to Dhubri to reach in time as fixed with Dumuria Raja, for a coordinated assault. But two unfortunate events delayed his march. His long bridge over the river gave away after half of the force crossed to the other side and the bridge had to be repaired again. One elephant suddenly had gone mad, threw down the driver and killed him and then stood on the way to disturb the march. It took long time to catch the elephant and to control it.

The Raja arrived at the fort of the imperialists four or five gharis after morning thereby losing the momentous of the planned action.[15]

Battle to Restore Dhubri

Raja Parikshit's forces were sighted by the Mughal's Khans who were camping at the Dhubri fort area. Lashmi Rajput and Jamal Khan opposed Parikshit with their forces but soon were defeated by the Raja. Secondly, he encountered the Mughals in the second redoubts. Mirza Nathan and Mirza Imam, the two top Generals by the meantime had taken position here. Commander Nitai of Kamrup force fought very bravely riding his elephant Gopikanth. He led his troops to meet the Mughals who had already taken strategic position to repulse and destroy any attempts of the Raja to restore Dhubri. But unfortunately Nitai was wounded by the enemy fire and fell down from his elephant. He was picked up by his soldiers and carried away from the theatre. With this discomfiture of the fall of the commander the Assamese troops were disarrayed and gradually withdrew from the aggressive advancement. The Mughals pursued them and the battle was carried to the other side of the stream where a stiff resistance was put up by the Koch under the command of Parikshit. Earlier the Raja made three attempts to cross the river but failed. It was scorching heat and men and animals were virtually roasted. The fight was equally balanced till six gharis before evening. The Mughals decided to abandon the battle for next day when they would take the field with better preparation and afresh.[16]

Defeat of Koch Navy

On the river the Koch fleet began to be turbulent with their definite superiority in water. The Mughals had already taken position to defy any attempts of Koch navy to overpower them. Mirza visualized that without cannon firing from the bank it would not be possible to win victory over the enemy. He therefore carefully placed his powerful cannon Kedar Mardan on a high ground pointing at Assamese boats on river. But he had only three balls to fire which would not serve any purpose. Dumuria Raja flushed with previous naval victory was advancing at a great speed to crush the Mughal fleet. Mirza Nathan from his high position fired 13 balls of Hatnol guns through his cannon. Though the first two fire missed the rest eleven became effective - one ball hit the breast of Admiral Dumuria Raja and the other balls killed the boat man and shattered the organized movement. After this Koch fleet could not make further advance and remained where it was. This tragic news reached Parikshit.[17]

Raja Parikshit's Withdrawal

After the tiring actions both at land and water both the sides were resting for the night. But Parikshit after the dinner of the soldiers decided to flee to Gilah, his summer capital, leaving most of the important weapons to fall into enemy hands. This perhaps was done to save his person to fight later on with great vigour and accumulated strength. The Mughals rejoiced at their unexpected victory at a very

critical juncture. But as per the standing instructions from Dhaka Mughal generals with a strong army and equipments moved up to Gilah to capture the Raja in person. Meanwhile Parikshit left Gilah with his family after completely evacuating the city. He again tried to secure Ahom help by taking shelter in the territory of the latter. So he went to western part of his kingdom to be close to the Assam border. From Gilah the imperial forces took their steps towards Kamrup to pursue Parikshit. Parikshit's all attempts to gain Ahom support failed leaving him no alternative but to make unconditional surrender to the Mughals. He thought that his sacrifice would save his subjects from the atrocities of the invaders. His kingdom was annexed to the Mughal empire and all his valuables and war materials were transported to Dhaka. He was taken as war prisoner to Dhaka though his family was released.[18]

Battle of Sahurbari

Mughal force with a determination to annex and rule western Kamrup and Darrang permanently, continued their advance to the interior of Kamrup. The local feudal lords and high dignitaries of Raja Parikshit fought against the advancing Mughal force. The brother of Raja Parikshit Baldev (Bali Narayan) proclaimed himself king and with the aid of Kansa Narayan, a Brahmin, he went to the kingdom of Darrang and rose into rebellion at a place called Sahurabari. A combined force of the Imperialist consisting of Shaikh Ibrahim, Raja Satrajit,

Jahan Khan and other Afghans added with five hundred matchlock men attacked Bali Narayan and Kansa Narayan at Sahurbari. After a heavy fight of three days and three nights, in which many were killed and wounded in both sides, the Mughals won the victory. Bali Narayan and Kansa Narayan took to flight in great humiliation and escaped half-dead.[19]

Administrative posts were established at the different places posting Mughal Thanadars with units of forces. But the local people defying the foreign authority rose into rebellions against the Mughals. Several prominent generals of repute and vassal Rajas and chieftains from Bengal sent to Kamrup to pacify the situation.[20]

Battle of Dhamdhama and Barnagar

Another powerful resistance was put up before the invading force by Sanatan Koch who proclaimed himself a Raja and established a strong fort at Dhamdhama besides raising number of small forts at different places in North Kamrup to obstruct the advancing Muslim force. Sanatan with the spontaneous support of the North Kamrup people against the invaders fought battles in different places. The combined force of Mughal could capture the fort of Dhamdhama by fighting more than four months against Sanatan. Finally in the battle of Barnagar he was defeated, took to flight and became vagrant in the jungles.[21]

The imperialist finally succeeded in conquering North Kamrup. Several thanas were established with the contingent

of armed forces to control the area. Hajo was made the head-quarter of the administrative centre of the Mughals. The Imperialists succeeded in establishing a thana at Pandu which subsequently used as the spring-board to bring the South Kamrup or Dakhin Kol* under their control.

Mir Ghiyasuddin Mahmud was appointed to hold the post of Diwan, Bakshi and waqi-navis of the Subha of Koch with his seat at Hajo.[22]

Mir Abdur Razzaq Shirazi and Seth Hridayram, loyal officers of Qasim Khan, who succeeded Islam Khan as governor of Bengal were posted to the thana of Pandu with a force of one hundred horsemen, five hundred matchlock men and the whole fleet of the zamindars. Shaikh Ibrahim was ordered to stay in north Kamrup and to be in active touch with revenue and settlement affairs.[23]

Great Battle of Ranihat

In Dakhin Kol there were eighteen Rajas sharing the region sometimes as vassal of Ahom king and sometimes as independent rulers according to the political development of the region. But most of the time they were the frontier guards against the external invaders. Subordination of north Kamrup by the Bangals** obviously was a threatening to their own

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* In lower Assam north bank of the Brahmaputra was called Uttar Kol and south bank was called Dakhin Kol.

** Bangals - All the people who entered Assam from outside used to be called Bangal. Even the Europeans were also called as Baga (white) Bangal. The term actually meant Bengali people.

independent existence. These eighteen kingdoms (principalities) were: Rani, Beltola, Luki, Barduar, Bholagaon, Mairapur, Kuki, Pantan, Bangaon, Bagaduar, Dumuria, Goliha, Salmara, Panbari, Tetelia, Bhurbandha, Hengrabari, Chamaria.[24]

Mughal Thanadar of Pandu Mir Abdur Razzak and other officers expected that all the eighteen Rajas of the region would come forward and would submit their loyalties accepting the Mughal supremacy knowing well the north-east policy of expansionism of the Mughals. But contrary to their expectation no Raja volunteered to submit before the imperialist. In a conference Abdur Razzak decided to take action to bring these Rajas under Muslim subordination by a method of oppression and terrorization. He selected Rani, the nearest estate of Pandu for immediate action.[25]

With a band of selected riders in the last prahar of the night he marched with speed and early in the morning plundered some villages of Rani and secured many slaves, captives and valuables. "At first he decided to pass the night there with vigilance, but at last he thought of returning to his camp and made untimely start at the end of the day. When all his followers were engrossed in the idea of captives and booties and reached a stream by a narrow path, sharp shooters of Rani came from all sides and began to shower arrows. In a skirmish, when Mir Razzak got wounded a confusion arose among the army of his followers. Mir and a few others escaped to Pandu wounded but many of the followers were killed

and became captives. Mir sent an urgent message to his headquarter.[26]

Abdul Baqi, the military operation in-charge of Kamrup Subha, after a good deal of discussion sent Mirza Nathan to bring the territory of all the eighteen Rajas under Mughal subordination. Mirza Nathan immediately started with a fleet of wind-like boats along with a large number of his own experienced fighters and reached the Thana of Pandu in the shortest possible time. After a few days, Mirza Nathan prepared for the expedition and advanced against Rani and establishing a chain of forts he proceeded to subjugate Rani and eighteen Rajas. After a third station he halted at the fort of Garal, a village about 9 miles west of Pandu. From this fort he got himself busy to make a strategic assessment for his next tactical movement against Rani. He planned first to defeat Rani and then to bring the other Rajas under his subordination one after another.[27]

Alliance for Defence by Assam Rajas

In the meantime foreseeing the imminent danger to their independence from the impending Muslim expedition the Raja of Rani took the initiative to organize a strong defence alliance for the common cause amongst the eighteen Rajas. A force of 22,000 was raised and a strong fort at Ranihat was constructed. Mirza Nathan reached Garal and laid his fort and was making arrangements for assault, taking with him the whole army leaving his Pandu fort and the rear not strongly guarded. The allied

council noted this point and wanted to take full advantage of the situation. On the suggestion of Rani Raja the council decided to make a night attack and raid Pandu fort and to destroy the Mughal fleet at Pandughat thereby to close the transit of ration and reinforcement to Mirza Nathan and to encircle the invading force for a complete annihilation.[28]

Somehow this strategic plan was leaked out and reached Mirza who realized the danger of his position if the enemy plan was implemented. Therefore leaving a skeleton force at Garal fort he rushed to Pandu fort to defend it from the local Rajas and with all haste he took the defensive position alerting all concerned at Pandu.[29]

Allied Attack on Pandu Fort

With a force of 22,000 infantry the Rajas fell upon the fort of Pandu in the last prahar of the night dividing their army into three divisions. The first division of the right wing consisting of 9,000 men entered from the Kamrup Duwar, the left wing with 7,000 infantry led by Kuki Raja attacked from Kamakhya Duwar i.e. from the rear and third division consisting of 6,000 men under Dimarua Raja attacked from the Kamakhya hill side. A severe battle was fought in all fronts till next evening. Hundreds were killed from both the sides. A great commotion prevailed inside the Mughal camp, but finally bold but frustrating leadership of Mirza Nathan and the use of heavy guns decided the battle in favour of Mughals. The Kuki Raja fighting heroically fell in the battle and the

Dimarua Raja got wounded and left the battle-field.[30]

Capture of Ranihat

Mirza Nathan, who got sufficient quantity of reinforcement from Hajo, now moved to Garal fort for taking the offensive against Ranihat. Taking the advantage of the flood situation, he could take his fleet also to engage in the assault. In an opportune moment and the auspicious day he fell upon Ranihat dividing his army into four regiments while the fleet moved to the brink of the water below the high hill. Despite a tough resistance put up by the allied force from hill fort Mughals finally won the victory. They pursued the Assamese forces to the interior of the hill, burnt the palace of the Rani Raja, plundered several villages and collected huge amount of booties and with great joy returned to Pandu. Thousands were killed and wounded in both sides. The shortage and limitation of fire-arms of the Assamese and the overwhelming numerical majority both in men and arms of the enemy happened to be their main cause of defeat. Engagement of navy by the invading party against which the Rajas could not master any, was the other cause of their disarray.[31]

Reorganization of the Allied Defence

The defeat suffered by the Allied Defence Force, no doubt, disgraced them but it did not demoralize them. After this victory Mirza Nathan went back to Hajo without making any arrangements for annexation of Rani to Mughal empire. Meanwhile Rani Raja made a vigorous campaign to restore and

reorganize the allied council. The other Rajas also, instead of being humbled with the Mughal victory, determined to work for a joint front to fight against the Muslim invaders. A strong fort at Ranihat was raised. On receiving the intelligence of the reorganization of joint defence the Mughal military council at headquarter in Hajo entrusted Mirza Nathan to bring to the book those daring Rajas and to annex their territory to Mughal empire.[32]

Third Mughal Expedition

Mirza Nathan was supplied all his requirements according to his demand. This time he planned to carry out the invasion from the border of Goalpara after crossing the river Brahmaputra and thereby giving surprise to the Rajas. A handful of Assamese force gave battle to the Mughal horde at Rangjuli where Mughal again won the victory. Terrorizing the local people even Mirza Nathan forcefully recruited about 500 local Garo youth in the Muslim army. A few border chieftains also out of fear surrendered before him. But these recruits and most of the chieftains betrayed the Muslims at the first opportunity itself. Mirza was proceeding ahead and laid camp and fort near Ranihat.[33]

Ahom Joins the Alliance

Getting information from spies about the strength of Mughal, Rani Raja along with other Rajas decided to get the support of the Ahom king. They sent an appeal to Ahom Swargadeo: "If you help us, we shall bar Mirza Nathan's progress

towards your kingdom. Otherwise if this year he becomes victorious over us, nothing will prevent him from destroying Assam next year." The Ahom King sent Hati Baruah, the Chief of his Sardars with a force of eighty thousand men to the aid of the hill Rajas. Rajkhowa and Khargharia were attached to his company. Raja Balinarayan and his prime minister Shumaruyan Kayeth, who had suffered defeat at the hand of Mughal and presently were with the Ahom King seeking his help, were also sent in their company. The Ahom king issued strict orders that they should fight in such a way as to capture alive the entire regiment especially their Commander Mirza Nathan and his officers. Hati Baruah and all other reached Ranihat. He did not raise any fort in the place. He went to a hill to the right of the fort of Mirza Nathan and constructed a fort close to hill and fully strengthened it within the night. From that place he began the construction of series of forts in order to bring the Mirza and his army to bay.*34

Rival Tactical Plans

Mirza Nathan through his foresight raised a wooden stockade blocking the way of the Assamese towards his fort. The regiment of Raja Satrajit who came to help the Mirza was posted at this wooden stockade with additional force of expert musketeers as their auxiliaries and thus secured from the

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* The names of the Ahom Officers mentioned in Ahom Buranji were Labo Baruah, Langi Abhoipuria, Kalia Raidangara Baruah, Langi Chang. (G.C. Baruah, Ahom Buranji, para 95.)

attack of the Assamese. When the Assamese General saw that this stockade stood on their way of advance they changed their plan. They turned towards the right and adopting the same procedure they proposed to raise a series of forts upto the ditch of the fort of Mirza in order to secure a commanding position from their fort over that of Mirza and thus harass the garrison within and put the beseiged into position of difficulty. The Mirza raised a barrier of wood and mud in front of his main fort. In spite of all the measures the Assamese under cover of series of forts, reached a distance of one arrow shot from the barrier of the Mirza.[35]

Besides, the allied force harassed the enemies and their beasts preventing them to graze and drink water in stream, firing from their commanding position over the hill. Hati Baruah deputed Mamun Govind, the uncle of Raja Bali-narayan, with a brave army of 4,000, to obstruct the supply of ration to the imperial army that used to come from Hajo via Sualkuchi-Garal-Haligaon and Minary. In all these places the Mughals succeeded in constructing their fort.[36]

Strict Order to Start Battle

More than one month was passed since the despatch of the Ahom Army to join the Hill Rajas against the invaders. The Ahom king became impatient for not yet starting the attack. He sent a letter severely censuring Hati Baruah and other officers for delaying action. He also sent two hundred Hangdan Dharas (Ahom swordsmen) with an order saying: "whoever falls back

this time will be cut into two at the waist by the Hangdan Dharas." All the Ahom Commanders, eighteen Rajas, Raja Balinarayan and Sumeriya Kayeth and other officers had an urgent war council and decided for immediate action. Accordingly they left their fort in charge of a small garrison and in an auspicious moment all the Sardars came out with their armies to a place situated to the South-west of Ranihat at a distance of one big cannon-shot from the imperial fort. There they raised within a night a lofty fort with a deep ditch around and equipped it by posting high cannon on its walls and tower. More than 50,000 men were engaged in the construction of this fort so close by, but it was not known to the Muslim till two men happened to be there out of their way.[37]

Another tactical move was to reduce the Mughal force at Ranihat before starting the battle. A false rumour was given currency that a force of 10,000 strong was on its way to Haligaon to prevent the supply and communication line of the imperialists. Mirza sent an equally strong force to defeat this attempt of forcing the Mughals to die in hunger. But this finally appeared to be a clever ruse played on him by the Assamese.[38]

A tough battle was fought between the two sides covering for several months with large numbers of casualties in either side. The Assamese played repeated ruse and feint against the imperialists, they concentrated the battle mainly in night fighting to which they were adept. They moved to the

uneven and forest areas where cavalry movement of the Mughals used to be difficult. Finally Mirza Nathan made his withdrawal and went back to Hajo via Minary, Haligaon, Garal and Sualkuchi. "A great number of Musalmans were cut to pieces and speared to death. The Musalmans suffered heavy loss in the battle. They fled in ships downstream the river Tilao (Lohit-Brahmaputra) and halted at Hajo. Assamese got possession of two brass cannons, 8 large cannons, 27 hand guns, 20 flint guns, 7 swords with gilted hands, 7 saddle, 60 horses, 20 buffaloes, 40 oxen, 7 cows and many other war materials."[39]

Fourth Mughal Expedition on Ranihat

After a gap of six months, Mirza Nathan with a more powerful force arrived Sualkuchi from Hajo. He crossed the river Brahmaputra and reached Garal to make a surprise attack. Before that by playing cunning diplomacy quite a few of the eighteen Rajas won over to the Mughal side, a few were neutralized. The Rani Raja with all his limited resources fought the Mughal force in different places at Minary, Malikuti, Khamranga, and Ranihat. He met the defeat and got killed in the battle fighting valiantly.[40]

Murder of Mughal Traders

While Kamrup was taxing the Mughal so much a news reached to Quasim Khan,* the Governor of Bengal, that a few

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* After Islam Khan, Quasim Khan became the Governor of Bengal.

Musalman traders were murdered near Kaliabar in the vicinity of Ahom territory, on suspicion of being spy and their merchandise looted. The Governor of Bengal, therefore, sent an expedition (1615-16 A.D.) under Abu Bakr to punish the Ahoms.[41]

Abu Bakr's Advance

Abu Bakr was given a powerful force consisting of three hundred selected horse, two thousand expert matchlock men, three hundred war boats, a number of Bengal Mansabdars of 1500 with their own contingent of force. The important nobles and Khans who were appointed to accompany Saiyed Abu Bakr were: Jagdev - grandson of Raja Todarmal, Ilahabad Khan Dakhini, Jamal Khan, Raja Satrajit, Lachmi Rajput, etc. One Ahom noble Akhek Gohain who was disciplined for irresponsible service by the Ahom King took the side of Mughals.[42] Abu Bakr was also instructed to suppress the mutineers on his way, establish Thanas in his rear for maintaining the supply line. On the death of Jagdev in illness at Barnagar, Quasim Khan appointed Syed Hakim and Syed Kasu, two brothers, to help Abu Bakr.[53]

First Naval Victory

Abu Bakr traversing a long way and establishing Thanas on his way he reached the mouth of the river Kalang i.e. border of Ahom territory, with his land and naval force. Three hundred war-boats of the Raja of Assam which were kept at the place for guard duty advanced forward and gave battle. The

Assam navy met a defeat, some of their boats were captured by Musalmans, some were drowned, many of the sailors were killed and captured and only a few could escape with a small number of boats to the place of safety.[44]

Abu Bakr's Strategy

After this victory in this first naval encounter Abu Bakr took up his march and reached the bank of the river Bharali and raising a fort halted there. He took up to construct a bridge of boats to cross the river but due to swift current and hostile wind, despite repeated attempts the project could not be completed. Meanwhile, reinforcement of four hundred horsemen and a large infantry arrived to strengthen his position.[45]

However, a company was sent to the other side of the river where they pitched a camp. Taking the advantage of relaxing position of Abu Bakr's men the Assamese made a surprise attack over the company and "they were looted, killed and captured".[46]

Abu Bakr after a hard work succeeded to cross the river. He raised his fort on the other side of the river. The Assamese were waiting for an opportune moment to attack the invader by making their arrangement with strict confidence. They were happy when they could know that Abu Bakr laid his fort and camp on the sandy shore of the river, thereby offering an opportunity to them to make the matter easy as establishment on sand can be made unstable with little difficulties.[47]

Assamese Counter Measure

As soon as the Ahom King heard about the arrival of Musalman invaders, he made vigorous plan to give a crushing defeat to the enemy. The king sent his highest officers down to the Bharali to meet the enemy. Accordingly the Buragohain (Prime Minister), Bargohain, Sadiyakhowa Gohain and Saring Raja proceeded to Dikhoumukh and erected their advance fort. The king also marched down and encamped at Kathalbari, keeping close link with the developing situation. A battle began in hot earnest between the two sides at Bharali. The Musalmans brought a large cavalry in their ships. This cavalry landed on the sand bank and with the support of infantry fought against the Assamese. The Assamese cavalry was also negligible. The Assamese force met a defeat and retreated.[48]

The news of reverse reached the king at his fort at Kathalbari. He sent a powerful reinforcement with a strong note to his officers on the battle front, saying that he who would retreat from the field of battle or would run away, would be severely punished. The flesh of his body would be cut to pieces in the presence of all others. The king sent his brother also to the front. On receiving the King's strongly worded message, all officers on the front sat together and consulted as to the steps to be taken. Saring Raja and Bargohain put all men to work allowing none to sit idly. They engaged three Neogs in making a bridge.[49]

The Battle

They cleared jungles from a distance of two or three Kos from the fort till they reached the bank of the ditch of the enemy fort by clearing four routes. After making all preparations a surprise night attack was launched on the enemies. Mirza Nathan on his narration mentioned that 'seven hundred elephants and three hundred thousand dextrous and bold infantry entered' the Abu Bakr's fort, in this hour of 'negligence and unpreparedness'. In this grave encounter Abu Bakr was killed and every camp and their inmates destroyed. Within a few hours' time the greatest devastation was done to the Musalmans.

Simultaneously, the Assamese navy fell upon the fleet of the Mughal Navy in the Brahmaputra. Though the first charge was repulsed and many boats were seized, yet the confusion that created in the land force after the death of the Chief and many other Sardars, the Musalmans were completely disarrayed and perplexed even in the river battle. The Mughal fleet suffered seriously. 'Those who survived fled half dead, each receiving ten to fifteen wounds. The boat of Miran Saiyid Masud who was the Commander of the fleet was saved with his son by the sailors. Satrajit with three wounds took to flight in his boat.'[50]

The Assamese fell upon the invaders from all sides in different groups and batches. They used guns, hangdan and poisoned arrows. Twenty to thirty thousand poisoned arrows

used to be showered on the enemy in each volley and from the different directions.

Mughal Casualties

About seventeen hundred men were killed. The group of men who escaped from the battle-field with several wounds in their body and died in the adjoining places would be double of this number. About three thousand men came out half dead and kept themselves concealed in the jungles trying to escape. Some of them later on rescued by Abdul Baqi and Mirza Nathan advancing from Hajo. Nine thousand men were taken as captives. Bengal Zamindar Raja Ray and Narsing Ray who were at the head of their boats, received two or three wounds and fell alive into the hands of the Assamese. Satrajit's son who was amongst the prisoners, was sacrificed to the goddess Kamakhya. A huge stock of arms, ammunition, horses, gold, silver and other war materials fell into the hands of their Assamese Generals who sent them to the king. The life of the General Ilahabad Dakhini and a few others were saved by the Assamese General when they obeyed loyally the message of the Assamese General "If you really desire peace, deliver to us all your arms of war, big or small, collected and packed together in one place without keeping any of them with you. Then we shall grant you your life."[51] In November 1617, Ahom king Pratap Singh advanced with his army towards Hajo, accompanied by Dharma Narayan whom he installed as tributary Raja of Darrang. Many other chiefs including the Dumaria Raja made their submission to the Ahom

king. He took Pandu and fortified and defeated the Mussalmans again at Agiathuti and pursued the invaders up to Hajo where a tough battle was fought with the strengthened position of the Mussalmans who defeated them in several engagements. Even the Buragohain was taken prisoner.[52]

Pratap Singh then ordered his scattered forces to rally at Samdhara. An enquiry was made to find out the causes of defeat. Those who were found neglecting their duties were given stringent punishments. Some high ranking officers like Chepeta Kari, Langi Khek, Langu Neog were beheaded, even Charing Raja and Bargohain also could not escape from punishment - they were confined in a cage.[53]

Creation of New Administrative Unit

Ahom king now considered it wise to create a new administrative unit covering the tracts east of Kaliabar outside the jurisdiction of the Bargohain and Buragohain as an effective defensive measure against aggressors. The new administrative unit was administered by the two officers i.e. Bar Phukan and Bar Barua.[54]

Renewal of Hostilities

In September 1619 hostilities were renewed by the Mussalmans in the south bank. In this battle Mussalmans were worsted. A large number of Mussalmans soldiers were killed and a large booty was also collected.[55] The neighbouring chieftains of the frontier e.g. Raja Subana, Raja Bakhina, Raja Sajai, Barduaria Raja, and Hengarabaria Raja met the Ahom

king and reaffirmed their loyalty to him offering presents to him. The Ahom also presented offer to them and asked them to fight against the common enemy unitedly.[56]

Peace Effort

Both the parties now seemed to have grown tired of the wars and Lakshmi Narayan, Raja of Koch Behar, with the consent of the Nawab of Dhaka, sent one Biro Kazi to Pratap Singh to offer his services as mediator to bring the Ahom-Mughal war into an end. Of course, by this diplomacy Lakshmi Narayan wanted to please both the parties in order to regain his lost territory from Nawab and to establish perpetual friendship with Ahom. Biro Kazi arrived at Ahom court with a message of Lakshmi Narayan. Ahom king kept Biro Kazi in confinement till the conciliation could be completed by his master. Pratap Singh continued his war preparation. A new fort was constructed at Sala.[57]

This effort to open negotiations between Mughals and Ahom viewed to be a serious menace by Satrajit, the Mughal Thanadar of Pandu in serving his selfish interest. Satrajit's loyalty to Mughals always used to be suspicious, he had evaded the payment of stipulated tribute to the empire. He was afraid that if peace was made between the two hostile parties his fate would be doomed. He therefore attempted intrigue with Ahoms by offering his friendship to Pratap Singh and Barphukan. Nawab of Dhaka sent fresh messenger to pursue the peace effort, but the Barphukan at Sattrajit's instigations,

misrepresented the object of their visit, and they were accordingly sent back without obtaining an audience of the Ahom King.[58]

At this juncture one Masu Gobind after conspiring against the Ahom king, fled to Luki. Sattrajit promised to arrest him, but, instead of doing so, he gave him warning and allowed him to escape to Bengal. This greatly enraged Pratap Singh and sent orders to the Barphukan to seize Sattrajit. A meeting was arranged and the two met in Umananda an island of Brahmaputra opposite Guwahati. Langi Pani Singia Bar Phukan advanced to the place accompanied by one hundred and five boats after holding detailed discussion with all his officers. Sattrajit also proceeded to the place taking with him fifteen boats. Both the officers embraced each other and exchanged presents. Being influenced by Sattrajit Bar Phukan allowed him to depart without attempting to effect his arrest. The king being informed of this and also of Bar Phukan's duplicity in the matter of the envoys from Dacca, caused the Barphukan to be chained in a dungeon, where he was left to starve to death. Neog succeeded him as Bar Phukan and the war came to an end.[59]

Relations of Ahoms with the Nawab again strained. According to "Padishahnama", for this, Sattrajit was mostly responsible. Uneasy relationship with Ahoms offered him advantage for serving his selfish interest. There were other reasons also for this friction. Some Muhammedan soldiers were

killed in Ahom territory, but Pratap Singh disclaimed all knowledge of the occurrence and refused to make compensation. One defaulting fiscal officer under the Nawab named Harikesh was given shelter by Pratap Singh who refused to surrender him alleging that the Nawab had similarly taken under his protection fugitives from his kingdom. This led to a fresh war. A force was despatched in 1635 to seize Harikesh by force, but it was opposed by the Ahoms and defeated the Mughals near the Bharali river.[60]

Assamese Offensive

Pratap Singh was now determined to carry the war into the enemy territory. The king ordered the Neog Phukan to summon all the frontier Rajas and chiefs to Kajali. Accordingly Dimaruah Raja, Hengarabaria Raja, Kajali Raja, Gukar Raja, Manik Raja, Haldhibaria Raja, Bamun Raja, Barduaria Raja and Raja Rupsing assembled at Kajali. The Bar Phukan offered presents to them all and told them the king's order that all of them would march against the Mussalmans in the company of Ahom army. The Rajas obeyed the direction. Ahom troops proceeded under command of Dharam Narayan and Kangla. They attacked the Mussalman garrison in the forts and defeated them capturing booties. The Mussalmans took their flight. In the following months more expeditions were sent to defeat the Mussalmans and capture their forts at Deomiha, Bantikath, Chamaria, Nagarbera, Hana, Nimisha. The Assamese force successfully completed their task and collected a huge war

booty including horses, guns, personnels. The Mughals retreated to Hajo and strongly fortified.[61]

The Assamese troops made speedy advance to Hajo under the leadership of Sepeta Bora and Rupdhar. Assamese navy was also sent to support the army. After a severe engagement the Mussalmans were defeated and a huge store was collected including 360 cannons. When Sattrajit heard of this defeat he desired to make peace. After a consultation with the Nawab, Katakis (envoys) were sent to Neog's son (Bar Phukan) asking to put a stop to the war by making peace and then open Hats (markets) and Phats (military stations). A temporary peace was established with the consent of the Ahom king.[62]

Mughal Reinforcement

Meanwhile the Mughal General wrote to Dhaka for aid and reinforcement. The Dhaka Governor sent fresh reinforcements under Islam Khan's brother Mir Zain Uddin Ali with 1,500 horses, 4,000 foot (musketeers and others) besides the contingent of the Bengal Zamindars and abundant supplies and munitions. Another attempt was made to push back the Ahoms from their frontier posts Srighat. But this attempt was also frustrated by the Ahoms by a surprise night attack on Mughal force with about 500 war boats. The lack of concert and proper alertness on the part of Mughal officers doomed their prospect. Sattrajit who played a conspiratorial role fled away with some Bengal Zamindars with their flotilla. Salih Kamlin was killed, Bayazid, the zamindar of Dhaka was taken prisoner by Ahoms.

Mughal flotilla and stores were captured by Ahoms. Abdus Salam and his brother Muinuddin were sent as captives to the Ahom court, but Zain-ul-Abidin bravely held out and fell fighting with his trenches.[63] In another theatre of war, however, the prospects of the imperialists brightened. The corps under Mir Zain-uddin Ali attacked Chandra Narayan, another insurgent son of Parikshit Narayan who ruled Karaibari and was ally to Ahoms. Mughal recovered Karaibari on the north bank of Brahmaputra and subdued many places in the south bank. Chandra Narayan fled away.[64]

Failure of Assamese Initiative

Meanwhile the Ahom army pushed on to Jogighopa and began to raise stockades there; but the imperialists advanced from Dhubri and by repeated attacks drove the enemy back beyond Manas river. The country south of Brahmaputra was now fully subjugated. The Mughals reached Chandankot and from that base sent out a detachment which was faced by Bali Narayan on the Kalapani river near Bishnupur, in the midst of dense jungle. Both sides now received large reinforcements and at last in the night Bali Narayan delivered an attack en masse. A prolonged fight followed, in which the Ahoms were defeated and their stockades were successfully stormed; they lost several chiefs and 4,000 soldiers were killed, three leading captains captured, besides much armament left to victors. Similar victories with large amount of booties and high ranking prisoners were gained by the

Mughals in the following week at Hajo, Pandu, Srighat, Saraighat after winning battles against the Ahoms. The Ahom army was scattered and nearly 500 of their war boats, 300 guns were captured by the victors.[65]

Next year the Ahom king despatched Lashan Baruah to attack the Mussalman fort at Saraighat and Neog Barphukan's son to attack the Pandu fort. The Mughal garrison failed to face the assault and retreated to Sualkuchi to organize an effective offensive. In the Sualkuchi battle the Assamese force met defeat, Bar Phukan's son was also killed. The Mughals captured four large ships and one cannon. Ahoms then retreated to entrench their positions with reinforcement from Garhgaon. The king appointed Lanmungshen as the Commander-in-Chief of war and Lakhan Baruah was made commander of the Naval forces. The forts of Saraighat and Pandu were repaired and appropriate vigilance was maintained on the enemy's movement. At last the enemy moved up-stream to fight against the Assamese. A bloody battle was fought at hot earnest both in land and water in between Saraighat and Pandu. Meanwhile the Hajo branch of the Barnadi dried up forcing big ships of Mughals to be struck aground. Mughals retreated again to Sualkuchi and the Assamese stationed at Agiathuti fort. An Assamese ambush party captured a firingi* (European) while

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* For the first time mention has been made about the presence of an European in Assam. The Mughals employed the services of the Europeans in their Assam campaign.

the latter was shooting vulture outside the Sualkuchi fort. He was then sent to the Ahom king.[66]

Assamese Victory

The king sent additional reinforcement in the form of 60 large ships and ten thousand men consisting of king's own trusted persons, the archers, the gunners and naval officers. The whole force assembled near the fort Sualkuchi. In the severe battle that ensued, Mughals were defeated with heavy loss. Sattrajit fled with 100 ships, Assamese army chased him upto Kalahi river. After pursuing upto Chandonkoth the Assamese force returned to Sualkuchi in three days. Assamese army captured 300 ships, 300 large and small guns, 160 swords, 76 shields, 60 flint guns, 140 hand guns besides large quantity of silver, gold and other things.[67]

Pratap Singh, now, tired of constant fighting, decided to take peace initiative after consultation with the Dangarias. Accordingly Dharma Narayan was sent to the Nawab with peace proposal. The king made Chiringphiseng of the Lanphuna family the head of the peace mission. On the suggestion of the king he implored upon the Nawab to come to Hajo from his fort at Bahacama for the talk to which the Nawab consented. But due to the betrayal of two Generals i.e. Mirza Makari and Mirza Hushing the peace offensive failed. The Ahom force demolished the brick town of Hajo, killed Mirza and his men. A large war booty consisting of 2,000 large and small guns, 920 swords, 4,000 large swords were captured from the Mughal fort. The

Assamese army withdrew to Saraighat and Pandu.[68]

Treaty Negotiation

The Muhammedans now united their forces and for several months series of battles were fought at Barpeta, Srighat, Pomara, Bishnupur, Bhatokuchi, Jakhali, Bhabanipur, Sala, Agiathuti, Bharali, Kajoli, Samdhara, Kaliabar with the Ahom armies with ups and downs on both sides. This prolonged wars made both the parties exhausted. Fresh initiative was made for peace. The Ahom frontier governors, after their twelve years of undecisive wars approached and induced the Ahom king to make peace. The king agreed and entrusted Momai Tamuli Barbaruah to take the lead for the negotiations. Mughal governor Alayar Beg, the successor of Zainuddin Ali at Guwahati, fully cooperated in the process. Finally a treaty was negotiated in 1639 A.D., under which the Bar Nadi on the North Bank of the Brahmaputra and Asurar Ali on the south, were fixed as the boundary between Ahom and Muhammedan territories. During the next twenty years, the country, west of this boundary line remained in the undisputed possession of the Muhammedans, the traces of the system of administration introduced by them survive to this day.[69]

Notes

1. E.A. Gait. History of Assam, p. 64 (ed. 1926).
2. Ibid., pp. 64-65.
3. M.I. Bora Trans., Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, pp. 222-223.
4. Ibid., p. 229.
5. Ibid., pp. 230-231.
6. Ibid., p. 231.
7. Ibid., pp. 231-232.
8. Ibid., pp. 234-236.
9. Ibid., pp. 236-237.
10. Ibid., pp. 237-239.
11. Ibid., pp. 240-241.
12. Ibid., p. 242.
13. Ibid., pp. 242-243.
14. Ibid., p. 243.
15. Ibid., p. 243.
16. Ibid., pp. 246-247.
17. Ibid., pp. 247-248.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., pp. 409-410.
20. G.C. Baruah. Ahom Buranji, pp. 102-103.
    Assam Buranji, MS, No. 60, DHAS.
21. M.I. Borah Trans., Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, pp. 365, 367, 368, 378, 379, 410.
22. Ibid., p. 411.
23. Ibid., p. 403.

24. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Tungkhungia Buranji, p. xxviii.
Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Deodhai Asam Buranji, p. 67.

25. M.I. Bora, op.cit., pp. 411-412.

26. Ibid., pp. 411-412.

27. Ibid., p. 414.

28. Ibid., p. 414.

29. Ibid., p. 415.

30. Ibid., pp. 415-417.

31. Ibid., pp. 418-419.

32. Ibid., p. 571.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p. 517.

35. Ibid., p. 574.

36. Ibid., pp. 580-581.

37. Ibid., p. 585.

38. Ibid., p. 611.

39. G.C. Baruah. Ahom Buranji, pp. 105-106.

40. M.I. Bora Trans., Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, pp. 613-630.

41. G.C. Baruah. Ahom Buranji, pp. 102-103.
G.C. Baruah. Assam Buranji, MS No. 60, Tran. No.82 DHA.

42. E.A. Gait. History of Assam, p. 110.

43. M.I. Borah Trans., Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, p. 319.

44. Ibid., p. 394.

45. Ibid., p. 395.

46. Ibid., p. 395.

47. Ibid., pp. 395-396.

48. G.C. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 97-100.

49. Ibid., pp. 88-90.

50. M.I. Bora, op.cit., pp. 397-398.

51. Ibid., pp. 397-399.

52. E.A. Gait. A History of Assam, pp. 112-113.
Sir J.N. Sarkar. A History of Bengal, pp. 300-301.
G.C. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 103-104.
M.I. Bora, op.cit., pp. 395-398.
Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Deodhai Asam Buranji, pp. 62-66.

53. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Deodhai Asam Buranji, p. 66.

54. E.A. Gait. History of Assam, pp. 112-113.

55. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Deodhai Asam Buranji, pp. 66-67.
E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 113.
G.C. Baruah, op.cit., p. 105.

56. G.C. Baruah, op.cit., p. 106.
Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Deodhai Asam Buranji, p. 67.

57. E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 113.
Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Deodhai Asam Buranji, p. 67.
G.C. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 107-108.

58. G.C. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 107-108.

59. Ibid., p. 110.
E.A. Gait, op.cit., pp. 113-114.

60. E.A. Gait, op.cit., pp. 113-114.

61. Ibid., pp. 114-115.

62. Ibid., p. 115.
G.C. Baruah, op.cit., p. 116.

63. G.C. Baruah, op.cit., para 132.
Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., pp. 328-331.
Ibid., pp. 328-331.

64. Ibid., pp. 328-329.

65. Ibid., p. 329.

66. G.C. Baruah. Ahom Buranji, pp. 117-118.

67. Ibid., p. 119.

68. Ibid., pp. 120-121.

69. E.A. Gait. History of Assam, pp. 120-121.
Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., pp. 329-331.
G.C. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 139-142.

CHAPTER VI

MUGHAL EXPEDITIONS IN ASSAM: MIR JUMLA'S EXPEDITION

During the period of unrest due to Shahjahan's illness leading to the war of succession, the Ahom King Jayadhwaj Singh wiped out the Mughal authority from Kamrup after a series of skirmishes with the Mughal Fouzdar Lutfullah (March 1659 to 1661 A.D.). The Koch king Prananarayan also joined hands with the Ahoms in this extermination of the Mughals from Kamrup with the intention of getting a share by dividing Kamrup between Ahoms and Koch.[1] Bargohain Tengshu Sandiqoi, the Ahom frontier Governor rejected the belated Koch proposal of an alliance against Mughals and he drove the Koch General Bhavanath Karzi beyond the Manas. Bargohain then advancing unopposed beyond Baritola, established military outpost in Hatchila (only 5 steps from Dhaka). He also refused to allow the Mughals to resort to trade and commerce in the local market.[2]

Apart from these immediate events, the previous activity of the Ahoms like the capture of Sayed Abu Bakr and Abdus Salam in the reigns of Jehangir and Shahjahan went unpunished. Aurangzeb, after his victory in the war of succession, assumed the imperial control in 1658 A.D. By June

1660 A.D. the civil war was over, and Mir Jumla was appointed Viceroy of Bengal with orders to punish Assam, Koch Bihar and Magh.[3] But Mir Jumla secured the Emperor's permission to postpone Magh campaign and to lead expedition against Koch Bihar and Assam.[4] Mir Jumla took this decision to chastise the rulers of Koch Bihar and Assam in the interest of maintaining imperial prestige and securing safety of the imperial dominions.[5]

Mir Jumla as a shrewd General, made vigorous war preparations working over the minute details. For this military and other purposes, he used the services of the English, Dutch, Portuguese and their ships. In August 1660 A.D., he employed in the service six or seven English sailors of a small vessel carrying Crevisa, the English agent to Dhaka.[6] Mir Jumla also utilized the services of both the Dutch and the English for constructing his warships. A galliot built by the Dutch at Hughly and manned by 6/7 English runaways under Mr. Dortson (Capt. John Durson) reached Dhaka about the end of May 1661 A.D.[7]

He also employed another Englishman Thomas Pratt by name in building boats and making ammunitions for river fighting.[8] Certain Russians also served in the Mughal army in Mir Jumla's Koch Bihar and Assam campaigns.[9]

Mir Jumla was actuated not only by imperialistic designs but also as his trusted Waq-a-Navis tells by a desire for "holy war with the infidels of Assam, and an ardent passion

for releasing Mussalman prisoners of war, rooting out idolators, lifting up the banner of Islam and destruction of the customs of unbelief and error."[10]

Mir Jumla resoved to conduct the war in person. First to conquer Koch Bihar and then to move against Assam. After making all necessary arrangement in Bengal, he set out for the expedition on 1 November 1661 A.D. Mir Jumla and his trusted General Dilir Khan started from Khizirpur with a powerful army of 12,000 horse, 30,000 foot, together with a vast flotilla of war boats numbering at least 323. The most powerful of them were the Ghurabs or floating batteries in charge of the Dutch, each towed by 4 Kusas (long row boats) and carrying 14 guns, a crew of 50 to 60 men. Besides, the Portuguese, the highest naval officers there were some English and Dutch sailors too. There were again several Russians who were extraordinarily well mounted. The Dutch were conscripted, but the English and the Portuguese were volunteers.[11]

Conquest of Koch Bihar

By taking his steps through an unusual and obscure way via Khuntaghat thus bypassing well fortified Ekduar, Mir Jumla entered the boundary of Koch Bihar on 13 December 1661 A.D. by giving a surprise to the Koch King. The latter found to be suicidal to fight the imperialist under the circumstances and therefore fled away from the country and took shelter in Bhutan. Mir Jumla annexed Koch Bihar to Mughal empire and

made the administrative arrangement. All the captured war materials were confiscated to the imperial government: 106 pieces of cannon, 140 Zamburaks, 11 Ramchargis, 123 muskets and other articles of the arsenals were sent to Dhaka. Mir Jumla's all attempts to capture the Raja had failed. After 16 days stay in Koch Bihar, he proceeded to Assam on 4 January 1662 A.D. During the rainy season of 1662, the Raja of Koch Bihar came down from the hills, recovered his country by taking advantage of popular resentment at the introduction of the Mughal land revenue system. He killed Muhammad Salih, the opposing mansabdar at Kathalbari, and prevented the coming of provision to the follower Isfandiyar Khan, who fled to Ghoraghat. Akbar Khan reached there, but was unable to recover the country.[12]

Assam Campaign

Meanwhile Rashid Khan who reached the border posts of Hatishala and Dhubri in 1661 A.D. found both the forts abandoned by the Ahoms. Dihingia Phukan and Lahui Phukan who were responsible for these two forts retreated beyond the Manas river to face the wrath of the Ahom King. They were arrested and imprisoned. The Ahom King appointed Manthir Bharali Baruah, a Hindu Kayastha of Bejdoloi family as the commander of the Lower Assam Army. Rashid Khan recovered the western end of Mughal Kamrup up to Rangamati, but suspecting a snare he haulted there for reinforcement from Mir Jumla before advancing further.[13]

Jogighopa has been strengthened at the mouth of the Manas and a new fort was constructed at Pancharatan by the Ahoms, on the opposite bank of the Brahmaputra. After a difficult march from Koch Bihar Mir Jumla joined Rashid Khan's army on 4 January 1662 A.D. The Nawara proceeded up the Brahmaputra therefrom cooperating with the land force, each arm giving cover to the other. Facing unspeakable hardships caused by the dense jungles and numerous nalas, the expeditionary force could march only 4 to 5 miles a day. In the advance line the men and animals jostled together and pushed and knocked each other and many died of attacks by bewildered and infuriated animals.[14]

On 17 January 1662, Mir Jumla halted five miles west of Jogighopa, a spacious and high fort, situated near the junction of the Manas and the Brahmaputra. A wall built on the summit of a hill adjoining the river blocked the path of the invader from the west. In accordance with their usual custom of strengthening mud fort the Ahoms, under Baduli Phukan defended the western environs of this fort with sharp bamboo stakes fixed on the ground as well as inside the numerous pits. The north of the fort was protected by pits, hills and jungles. The defending garrison having been depleted by the outbreak of cholera, the Ahom Dangarias decided to evacuate the fort and Mir Jumla captured it without any fight. Mir Jumla crossed the deep and violent river Manas and divided the land force into two sections: he himself with the main

army proceeded along the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, Syed Nasiruddin Khan marched along the southern bank with a contingent, while the fleet kept pace with the land forces.[15]

This three-pronged advance was eminently successful. On the northern bank the expeditionary force occupied the "Chowki of Khatta" and bypassing the strong Ahom force at Srighat, the Mughals reached the environs of Guwahati on 4 February 1662 A.D. On the next day the Mughals attempted an encircling movement to destroy Srighat, but meanwhile the Ahom Army escaped it by a hurried night flight upto the river Kajoli. On the southern bank the fort of Pancharatan was wrested from the Ahoms who losing the first battle retired to Simalugarah. The forts of Pandu, Beltola were also occupied and thereby recovered Guwahati by the Mughal.[16]

The whole army of Mir Jumla now crossed to the southern bank with the obvious intention to capture Gargoan - the capital of Ahom King, located in the south bank. The only stronghold that lay in Mir Jumla's path to the Ahom Capital was Samdhara at the mouth of the Bharali river and Simalugarah opposite to it on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra. After a long seige and tough battle the fort of Simalugarah was captured. In the naval battle above Kaliabar, the Ahom Navy was completely destroyed. This defeat forced the Ahom to make strategic withdrawal from Samdhara. These three debacles destroyed the morale of Ahoms and had offered an easy access to the Mughal to capital Gargoan. Ahom king made some peace

initiative which was rejected by Mir Jumla. Ahom indeed took recourse of guerrilla tactics organizing surprise raids and night attacks, hindering enemy supplies and killing any stray persons searching forage or firewood. They adopted the scorched earth policy by destroying stores of gun powder and paddy and preventing the boats falling into the enemy hands. The northern Ahom Army destroyed store of gun powder at Samdhara before evacuating it. Retreating eastwards to Sola-garah they laid the country waste and compelled the people north of Tilam river to forsake their villages, and thereby deprived the Mughal bands who went ahead for collection of provisions. The Ahoms at Jamunamukh burnt the dwellings in the fort.[17]

Mughal Besieged the Ahom Capital

By his lightening advance Mir Jumla entered Gargoan on 17 March 1662. The Ahom king fled to the pestilinial hills of Namrup earning the epithet of Bhagania Raja or deserted king for ever. The Mughal had conquered only the soil of the capital and neither the king nor the country. So in view of the early and heavy rains of Assam Mir Jumla halted there. The fleet under Admiral Ilen Hussain had to stop at Lakhau some eighteen miles north-west where the anchorage was deep enough for the big gun-boats. The viceroy with the main army was looking for a higher ground for their camp to avoid possible flood hazards near the capital city of Gargoan, while the Ahom capital with its countless spoils of war was held by

a strong garrison under Mir Murtaza. Many outposts were set up on land. From Lakhau the line of communication was kept open westward to Guwahati and from Guwahati south to Dhaka. Meanwhile the Ahom forces were concentrated in the mountains south of Gargoan and the huge island of Majuli west of that city.[18]

Mir Jumla left the commander of his artillery in the conquered fortress of Gargaon to take charge of it, and to get his guns in order, for artillery was all important in that country. Mir Jumla then retired thirty kos and a half from Gargoan to Mathurapur (31 March 1662), which was situated at the foot of a hill, and is not liable to inundation. There he formed cantonments in which to pass the rainy season. For seven or eight kos round it he stationed outpost under experienced officers to guard against surprise attack by the Assamese. Despite,the Assamese repeatedly made attacks on dark nights, and killed many men and horses.[19]

The men of the army reduced to such extremity that some of the officers, after consulting together, were about to move off and leave Mir Jumla. He got information of this, and took measures to prevent it. He gave public orders for the army to move its position towards the region held by the Raja, but privately he prepared for a "backward" march, and comforted his men with prospects of peace and return. When the Assamese got intelligence of the movement, they assembled in great numbers and showed great insolence. Dilir Khan

resolved to punish them, and thousands of them were slain and made prisoners. Mir Jumla ordered that the prisoners should have the heads of the slains tied round them, and be thus exposed to the derision of the camp. He then sent them to the outposts to be again exposed, and afterward put to death.[20]

The strenuous war compelled Mir Jumla to come to a settlement by forcing the local king to sign an agreement. After a prolonged negotiation a Treaty was signed at Ghilajarighat with humiliating terms on Ahom king.[21]

Treaty of Ghilajarighat

"After prolonged negotiations both the parties agreed to make a peace by signing a Treaty at Ghilajarighat (January 1663). Due to illness of Mir Jumla, the final part of the treaty was negotiated by Diler Khan on the modality suggested by Khawja Bhor Mal."[22]

"Illness forced the Nawab to listen to the proposals of peace. Bhor Mall was again employed to confer with the Phukans, and finally the following conditions were agreed upon.

1. The Rajas of Assam, Jayadhwaj Singha and Batam (Tipam Raja) should each send one of their daughters to the imperial harem.

2. Each should pay 20,000 tolas of gold and 12,20,000 tolas of silver.

3. Fifteen elephants to be sent to the Emperor, fifteen to the Nawab and five to Diler Khan.

4. Within the next twelve months 3 lacs tolas of silver and 90 elephants to be sent as tribute to Bengal, in three four-monthly instalments.

5. Twelve elephants to be furnished annually.

6. The sons of Budh Gosain, Khargharia Gosain, Parbatia Gosain and Bar Gosain — the four principal Phukans of the Rajas — to remain as hostages with the Nawab, till fulfilment of the conditions in para 4.

7. The following districts to be ceded to his Majesty the Emperor.

<u>In Uttarkol</u>

(a) Sirkar Darrang bounded by Guwahatti on one side, and by the Burari which passes fort Chamdhurah, on the other side.

<u>In Dakhinkol</u>

(a) The district of Nakirani
(b) The Naga hills
(c) Beltali
(d) Dumuria

8. All inhabitants of Kamrup kept as prisoners by the Rajah in the hills and in Namrup to be restored; so also the family of Baduli Phukan.

The districts of Dakhinkol that were ceded, have at no previous time formed part of his Majesty's empire. Nakirani

(Deshrani) lies near the Garo hills."[23] (Annotated from H. Blockmann's abstract from Fathiya-i-Ibriya, J.A.S.B., Vol. XVI, 1872, pp. 93-94.)

Sir J.N.Sarkar Considers the treaty as "peace with honour". The ailing and aged Mughal General was between the two horns of dilemma. As J.N. Sarkar argues -

"Weighed down by disease, worried about his shattered constitution, disconcerted by disaffection in the army, calculating the possible evil effects of rejecting the peace offer, Mir Jumla reluctantly agrees to conclude peace."[24]

Return of Mir Jumla

"Mir Jumla left Assam in February 1663 A.D. after having appointed Rashid Khan as Fouzdar of Lower Assam newly ceded to Mughals. He took with him 12,000 Assamese followers and captives. Those who accompanied Mir Jumla of their own accord included Baduli Phukan, Maupia, Hari Deka's son, Udhab Duaria, Dangdhara and Raghu Kath's son Manahar Kakati. The following Ahom officers were taken captives by the Mughals - Luthuri Chetia Rajkhowa, Darangia Bargohain Rajkhowa, Laluk Gohain and Dighala Rajkhowa. King Jayadhwaj Singha protested against this action of the Mughal General which was avowedly in contravention of the terms of the treaty of Ghilajarighat."[25]

Mir Jumla began his return march with an army broken down by disease and many of the officers and nobles at the point of death. Mir Jumla himself was seriously ill, but he strove to the last in the service of his Emperor. Concealing

his own suffering or making light of it, Mir Jumla exerted himself day and night to direct and comfort his army, until he was overpowered by disease and knew that the time of his departure was near. He died at Khizirpur, on the frontier of Koch Bihar, on the 12th Ramzan, at the beginning of the 6th year of Aurangzeb's reign.[26]

Reaction of the Treaty

The Treaty of Ghilajarighat in January 1663 A.D. transferred Kamrup to the Mughals and imposed a heavy war indemnity upon the Ahoms. Jayadhwaj Singh, the Ahom King, died in 1663 A.D. as the saddest man as he could not retrieve the loss during his life time. From his death bed he appealed to his ministers: "It should be your earnest endeavour to extract from the nation's bosom the spear of humiliation fixed upon it by our enemy, the Mughals."[27]

Chakradhwaj Singha, who succeeded Jayadhwaj Singha, took vigorous step for reorganizing and reinforcing the Assamese army for launching offensive to expel out the Mughal from Kamrup. Payment of war indemnity to the Mughals were deferred after the first instalment under different pretext despite repeated pressures from the Mughal authority of Guwahati and Dhaka.

Large quantity of arms and ammunitions were made in the ordinance factory under the direct supervision of the king. Huge stocks of food and provisions were stored. Naval fleet was completely reorganized by building ships and

recruiting sailors, people who fled the country during Mir Jumla's invasion were rehabilitated under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister Aton Buragohain, forts were rebuilt and further strengthened, steps were taken to remove any types of misunderstanding amongst the generals. Full confidence was restored amongst the population and high morale was created in the fighting force. Following a very careful and meticulous selection procedure a new general was appointed by the king to command the army. He was Lachit Barphukan the son of the great Momai Tamuli Bar Baruah. Lachit was also given the control of the civil administration of Kamrup with his headquarters at Kaliabar till he occupied Guwahati from Mughal. The Prime Minister Atan Buragohain, the wisest man of the country was also to move to lower Assam along with this expedition so that Lachit could gain the benefit of the counsel of Buragohain.[28]

Letters were despatched to the Rajas of Koch Bihar, Jayantia and Kachar in order to organize an anti-Mughal confederacy in Eastern India. They sent back reassuring promises to help the Ahom king in the event of the renewal of hostilities. The Raja of Jayantia and his vassal chief of Nartiang wrote to the Ahom king, "Gargaon and Jayantia are not separate. At your discomfiture at the hands of the Mughals I am feeling as if my own country has been harassed and humiliated by the enemy. ... The Mughals have simply invaded your country; they have not been able to hold it under their domination permanently. ... Measures now should

be concerted to organize more effective cooperation between ourselves so that we may wreak vengeance."[29]

Similar correspondences were made with Koch Raja Prananarayan who had restored kingdom from Mughal. Prananarayan used to supply informations to Raja Chakradhwaj about the victory of Shewa (Shivaji Maharaj) over the Mughals in Deccan. A copy of a letter written by King Chakradhwaj to Raja Prananarayan on February 7, 1666 A.D. offers a clear indication how the King Chakradhwaj Singh was inspired by Shivaji's victory. Excerpts of the letter as translated by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan from the manuscript of Assam Buranji reads: "You have sent the verbal message informing me that war was commenced between Shewa and Moguls, and that Shewa having defeated the Moguls has pushed them back to a distance of twentytwo days' march; that Daud Khan has fallen, and Diler Khan is wounded, and that the Badshah has come from Delhi to Agra ...".[30]

Renewal of Hostilities

Early in 1667 Sayed Firoz Khan, who had succeeded Rashid Khan as thanadar of Guwahati, sent a strongly worded letter to the Ahom king, demanding the payment of the balance of the indemnity still outstanding. It is not quite clear how much remained unpaid. In only one Buranji the subject at all fully dealt with, and that too is very obscure. It appears that elephants were sometimes sent in lieu of money, and that their value was calculated at Rs.2,000 each; at

this rate it would be possible that a sum of Rs. 112,000 was still due.[31]

Chakradhwaj Singh had already been busily engaged in the repairing the forts at Samdhara and Potakalang, and was restoring his army to a state of efficiency; and, on receiving Firoz Khan's letter, he made up his mind to start fighting. A meeting of the Gohains and other nobles was convened, where the king said, "Death is preferable to a life of subordination to foreigners. I have to surrender my independence for a suit of sewn garments.* My ancestors were never subservient to any other people, and for myself cannot remain under the vassalage of the Mughals. I am a descendant of the Heavenly King, and how can I pay tribute to the wretched Mughals? You should devise and adopt measures so that I can regain my garrison of Guwahati after expelling therefrom the foreign usurpers."[32]

The necessary preparations were made; and it was planned that on August 20, 1667 after sacrifices had been offered to Lord Indra, a well equipped army would set out to wrest Guwahati from Mahammedans. The command was entrusted to Lachit, the son of Momai Tamuli Barbaruah the great statesman-warrior of the reign of king Pratap Singh, who was already appointed Barphukan. But a successful campaign

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* The Mughal emperor used to send a pair of garment through his envoys to the subordinate kings who had to wear it in front of the envoy stepping down from the throne thereby accepting Mughal subordination.

required an exciting provocation to stir the minds of the combatants with the feeling of justness of the cause. The provocation was furnished by the extremely indecorous and humiliating request made by the two successive Mughal Fouzadars — Rashid Khan and Firoz Khan — for being furnished with a number of pretty damsels from Assam for the pleasure and entertainment of the Fouzadars. The infuriated monarch Chakradhwaj Singh no longer tolerate the rising tempo of Mughal effrontery.[33]

The Offensive

On August 20, 1667, the day suggested to be auspicious by the royal astrologer, customary religious ceremony was performed and the Assam Army and Navy under the overall command of Lachit Barphukan started for the task. Navy sailed downstream by the Brahmaputra with the support of the advancing army by the both banks.[34] Before the expedition was started the king offered valuable presents to the commanders of the expedition and delivered to them the message:

"I desire that your wives and children, and the cows and Brahmins should be duly protected and preserved; and that I should also acquire the prestige and reputation of having vanquished the Moguls. If you prove incompetent in the task of defeating the enemy at Itakhuli you shall not be let off with impunity. And so you think that there will be paucity of Phukans and Rajkhowas like yourselves?"[35]

Ahom army encamped at Kaliabar and from there on first

week of September 1667 A.D. first offensive was launched at the Mughal garrison at Bahbari on the north bank and captured two Mughal commanders with substantial quantity of arms and ammunitions.[36]

Advancing towards Guwahati the forts of Kajali, Sonapur, Panikhaiti and Tatimara between the Kapili and Guwahati were captured after stiff fighting. Hundreds of Assamese captives were released from these places.[37]

The main objectives of the Assamese force was to capture Itakhuli or Sukreswar hill in Guwahati, strategically located to command and most invulnerable positions on the river Brahmaputra. The Mughals concentrated their men and provisions including big cannons on this fort. The capture of the fort was a prestige issue for the Assamese as well as an opening of a bottleneck for entering into enemy's stronghold. An Ahom commander named Pelan Phukan was reported to have said: "I shall be the bondsman of the soldier who can capture Itakhuli." The king was communicated by the spy about this defeatist mentality of Pelan. The king made to rip open the heart of Pelan thereby warning to all who would develop a feeling of defeatism.[38]

Capture of Itakhuli Fort

The Assamese commandos climbed up the hill in a dark night and made the Mughal cannon ineffective by putting water in their muzzles. The fort was then attacked scaling walls with the help of ladders and captured it on November 4, 1667.

Several Mughal Sardars including Syed Firoz Khan, the Fouzdar of Guwahati and Syed Sana were captured along with huge booties consisting of elephants, horses, guns, food stores, coins, etc. The enemy was chased down to the mouth of Manaha river, the old boundary between Mughal and Assamese. On the north bank also the Ahoms advanced up to North Guwahati and seized Shahburuj or Manikarneswar hill. Thus within two months' time the Ahom succeeded in recovering their lost possession. A large number of countrymen who had been taken by Nawab Mir Jumla rescued by the Assamese soldiers.[39]

On receiving the glad tidings of victory king Chakradhwaj Singha said: "It is now that I can eat my morsel of food with pleasure."[40]

The victory of the Assamese forces was commemorated by a stone pillar set up at Guwahati shortly after the engagement. The inscription which is in Sanskrit was translated by H.C. Goswami as: "In the year 1589 saka there flourished the Barphukan of Namjani (Lower Assam), the son of Barbarua (Momai Tamuli). He became victorious in the war waged by the Yavanas in the full array of various of weapons and arms, elephants, horses and captains. The body of the Barphukan was adorned by all varieties of ornaments, his heart is illumined ...".[41]

This successful event was also inscribed on a cannon found at Silghat, near Simlagarah Fort. The inscription refers to the recovery of the weapon by King Chakradhwaj

Singha after having destroyed the Muhammedans in battle saka 1589 — "King Cakradhvaja, having again destroyed the Musalmans in battle in Caka 1589, obtained this weapon, which declares his glory as the slayer of his enemies."[42]

Diplomatic Correspondences

Immediately after the expulsions of the Mughals, Atan Buragohain Dangaria, the Prime Minister of Assam wrote to Nawab Shaista Khan, Subedar of Bengal, apprising him of the circumstances leading to the conflict. He mentioned that despite the payment of war indemnity prestige and honour of Assam was not looked after by the Mughals. Their officials posted at Guwahati inflicted severe insults to the Assamese without any regard to ranks. Even they demanded virgins for their entertainment creating great incense to the monarch. He explained that many factors combined together forced the king to take action against the Mughal officials. He implored that if the Nawab so desired could send envoys for establishing friendly relations.[43]

Defensive Measures

After the expulsion of the Mughals, the Ahoms turned their attention to the perfection of measures for the retention of their newly recovered territory. All the best officers whether in statesmanship or war were now posted at Guwahati. The commanders discussed in depth the defensive plan to be made against any attempt of the Mughals to reconquer Assam. Finally they decided to strengthen the forti-

fication of Guwahati, taking advantage of the high hills which skirt round the city on both banks of the river Brahmaputra, so that soldiers and war provisions could be safely accommodated in the area inside. The intervening field between one hill and the next was to be linked by a newly constructed earthen rampart. The hills and the ramparts taken together would provide a ring of defence about twenty-five miles in circumference, and the city inside, with the Brahmaputra flowing in the middle would provide a suitable base from where the situation could be very effectively controlled.[44]

Premier Atan Buragohain was entrusted with the works of fortification of Guwahati. Employing all the resources at his disposal, he finished the work within an unexpected short period. Lachit Barphukan used to inspect the strong and vulnerable points under the pretext of hunting on horse back or on foot. Batteries were mounted at specified intervals on the hill-tops, the hill-slopes and the ramparts and properly trained artillery men were posted at each point. A soldier was posted on the hill tops at an interval of $13\frac{1}{2}$ feet and on the ramparts after every 9 feet. A specified area known as 'pali' was allotted to each captain. Even the civil administration of Kamrup was completely reorganized to drive maximum advantage for military support.[45]

The whole area was divided into a number of sectors, each being commanded by an officer of distinguished gallantry

and proved efficiency. The main war zone extended from Pandu to Asurar Ali on the south bank. The Itakhuli Hill commanding a view of entire area, was headquarters of General Lachit. Atan Buragohain remained in charge of northern division at his base on the Lathia Parvat. The eastern command on the north was in charge of Baghchowal Barpatra Gohain whose headquarter was at Kurua.[46]

Deployment of force to secure maximum strategic and tactical advantage was undertaken as follows:

Deployment of Force

Overall Commander and C-in-C:

Lachit Barphukan with HQ at Itakhuli.

Sectors and Commanders - South Bank:

Amarajuri to Pandu - Phukan Kahuwa Bargohain

Rangoli Buruj to western steps of Kamakhya - Tarua, son of Dihingia Rajkhowa

Duargorila - Latum Baruah

Parghopa to Dhenukhirua - Barukia Gohain

Gotanagar to Asurar Ali - Hazarika Neog

Asurar Ali - Kaliabaria Phukan

South of Asurar Ali - Marangikhowa Chetia

Usha Haran hill - Namdangia Rajkhowa

Ubhata Shimalu Road - Chakrapani Rajkowar

Sectors and Commanders - North Bank:

Juria to Saraighat - Abhaipuria Rajkhowa

In front of Sarai - Younger Abhaipuria Rajkhowa

Kekuri to Lathia - Makharu Rajkhowa

At Lathia hill - Bahgaria Burhagohain

Latia to Chila - Miri Sandiquoi Phukan

Sendurighopa to Kharagarua Ali - Tarua Rajkhowa

Lathia to Chila Parbat - Gajpuria Rajkhowa.

In water - in front of Aswakranta:

Rangmahal to Kurua - Charingia Phukan

At Chahburuj - Rup Sandikoi

At Kurua - Barpatra Raidangia Phukan.[47]

Raja Ram Singh's Expedition

The news of the defeat of Firoz Khan and the loss of Guwahati, reached Aurangzeb in 1667 A.D. He at once resolved to wipe out the disgrace, and with this object he appointed Raja Ram Singh, the son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh to the command of an imperial army, which was to be strengthened by troops of the Bengal Command. Rashid Khan who served as Thanadar in Guwahati earlier, was appointed as second in command of the expedition. Some time was taken up in collecting and transporting his army, which consisted of 18,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry, with 15,000 archers from Koch Bihar, 500 artillery men, 21 Rajput Chiefs, 4,000 troopers in his own pay. Besides, he had imperial Mansabdars like Raja Indramani, Chadment Khan who were commanders of 2,500, Alam Khan and Barkam Khan commanders of 2,500; Nasir Khan, Zubel Beg, Raja Prithu, Raja Manik, Mir Gajrab commanders of 2,500; Nasir Khan, Kirat Singh, Bhurtiah, Raghunath Singh

of Mirtah, and Bairam Deo Sisodia; from Koch Bihar also some commanders joined the Mughal army. They were: Raja Jainarayan, grandson of Raja Parikshit, Kavi Sekhar Baruah, Sarveswar Baruah, Manmath Baruah and Ghanasyam Bakshi. He also brought with him Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur who was then living in Patna and five Muslim Pirs to undo the effect of Kamrupi black arts.* At Dhaka from Subedar Shaista Khan he received reinforcement of a force of 2,000 soldiers.[48]

Finally with his force Ram Singh reached Rangamati in February 1669 A.D. The Ahoms were yet to be fully prepared for resisting the Mughals' advance. So they resorted to their old device of opening insecure negotiations in order to gain time. They sent envoy to enquire from Ram Singh the reasons for his intended Assam invasion. He was also offered to settle the issues by peaceful negotiations instead of war if there was any reasons for conflict.[49]

In return Raja Ram Singh demanded the restoration of the limits fixed in 1639 A.D. in default of which the Barphukan was asked to give the Rajput Raja 'a fight for an hour'. Ram Singh even offered to furnish war materials to the Assamese General if there was a shortage in the latter's camp.[50]

Lachit Barphukan sent a reply to Raja Ram Singh,

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* Rumours were afloat in Muslim Camps that the Assam was land of magic and sorcery which could make a man animal and so on. The cause of Muslim defeat was also assigned to this so-called black art.

"Guwahati and Kamrup do not belong to the Mughals. It was through mere chance that they fell into the hands of the Mughals for a few seasons." Rajput Raja's offer of war materials dismissed by Lachit saying that, "You have come over a long distance undergoing fatigue in the journey and the provisions may be inadequate for your purpose. Our Majesty the Heavenly King has nothing unavailable to him. If the Rajput Raja falls short of materials, he may ask me and I shall try to oblige him."[51]

These correspondences had given time to Lachit Barphukan to complete his arrangement according to his desire.

The leadership of Raja Ramsingh of Amber in an expedition to Assam awaken the Assamese to a consciousness of the necessity for more arduous preparation. Ram Singh's participation did not produce feelings of consternation in the hearts of the Assamese, it only convinced them that the ensuing campaign was going to be a strenuous game as compared with preceding war, the war of recovery. Thus there ensued a new phase in Assam Mughal conflicts, the defensive war of retaining possession of Guwahati and territories up to the Manaha.[52] As soon as Ram Singh arrived at Rangamati the Ahom commanders stationed at Manaha attempted to oppose the enemy. There were a few skirmishes, but the Assamese could not attain any success.[53]

The Barphukan realizing the futility of opposing the enemy at the outlying forts on the frontier adopted a new

strategy of luring the invaders into the war zone of Guwahati, surrounded by hills on all sides with forts and garrison at regular intervals. He decided to give battles from this defensive position. Accordingly he despatched three Raj-khowas to Manaha to seduce the enemy into the neighbourhood of Guwahati. The detachments of the Rajkhowas sailed upto the river remaining within the sight of Ram Singh's army but outside the range of Mughal cannons. They sailed back in advance of Ram Singh's fleet, thus giving impression of retreat, thereby offering the Mughal army the pleasure and pride of pursuing the retreating Ahom contingent.[54]

In April 1669 Raja Ram Singh advanced up to Hajo and pressed closer to the Assamese fortifications on the north bank. He despatched a messenger named Daivakinandan demanding Lachit for the evacuation of Guwahati. A bag of poppy seed was sent to Lachit impressing numerous character of the Mughal army. Lachit sent his reply through his messengers Nim and Ram Charan that Guwahati would be delivered only if the Swargadeo of Assam and the Padshah of Delhi decided on such an arrangement by mutual agreement. The Barphukan sent a tube filled with sands with the brief remark: "This is the characteristics of our soldiers", meaning thereby that the Assamese army was numerous and indissoluble as the sands in the tube. Poppy seeds could be ground into paste whereas sand remained indissoluble.[55]

Battle of Saraighat

Ram Singh finding it impossible to get back Guwahati

by persuasion and threatening now made full arrangement for fight. He attempted to enter the fort at Sarai (Amingaon) on the north bank by digging an underground passage. But was frustrated by the Assamese soldiers who filled the surrounding moat with water. He succeeded in effecting a breach at Rangali buruz near Pandu on the south bank, but the Assamese repaired it promptly. Further attempt was made to enter Guwahati through Darrang but it was baffled through the timely action of the vassal Raja of Rani. In an open engagement near the Sesa river in the vicinity of Agiathuti, the Ahoms first obtained a victory over Mughals. But Ram Singh personally taking the battlefield inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Assamese. At another encounter at Rangmahal, Assamese force led by Gohain Phukan reversed the initial defeat and thereby pushed back the Mughals without allowing them to achieve any tangible victory.[56]

So far the Ahom action was defensive in character. General Lachit had waited for the exhaustion of the enemy's provision and reduction of their numbers by pestilencial diseases with the commencement of monsoon. The delay would also enable him to bring his preparation to the desired perfection. He thus encouraged a state of seige though of a very restricted character. He also carried out guerrilla fighting harassing the enemies at position and post by hit and run tactics.[57]

The Ahom king became extremely unrest with the delayed

direct encounter with the Mughals. He even threatened the Barphukan and the other commanders with dire consequences if they further postponed the offensive operations. He issued order to attack the Mughals immediately.[58] At this time the Mughals concentrated their army near Alaboi hill in the vicinity of Dalibari. There was a vast plain in front of the Mughal camp, and the level land touched the Brahmaputra in one side, the Sesa river on the other. Lachit did know it well that in an encounter in this place he would not meet success as his army was shy of horses. But he had to obey the command of the king.[59] In a terrible contest between the two adversaries in this plain of Alaboi, the Assamese inflicted severe loss to the enemy. But the concentrated full weight of Ram Singh finally routed the Assamese. About ten thousand soldiers of the Barphukan lay lifeless in the Alaboi plain. The massacre at Alaboi had terribly upset Lachit Barphukan and he sat deeply depressed in his camp. The Premier Aton Burhagohain gave him counsel saying: "Well General, such a reverse should never shake your confidence in our ultimate victory. Eventualities of this character are normal in a protracted warfare. When you agitate the water of a pond for catching large fishes, the fish catchers will be pierced by the thorny scales of the smaller fishes. You should judge your success by the number of large catches."[60]

The victory of Ram Singh in the battle of Alaboi made him jubilant and more confident but the battle did not destroy

the fighting spirit of the Assamese who retreating to their forts engaged for reorganization. Ram Singh now adopted all possible means of fair or foul diplomacy to persuade Lachit and premier Aton Burhagohain for evacuation of Guwahati and reversion to the status quo ante of the year 1639 A.D. His policy of persuation resulted with a reply from the Barphukan: "Our sovereign Swarga Maharaja is the Lord of the East, and the Badshah is the Lord of the West. If they decide then we can surrender our territory and you can also surrender Bengal. If we enter into any terms ourselves, our respective master may refuse to ratify them."[61]

Ram Singh now became desperately anxious to bring things to a head. He was informed by Pandit Rai, his confidential and trusted minister and diplomat that there was only one possible avenue for attack on account of the existence of a slight opening in the rampart in the sand banks between the Barphukan's headquater at Itakhuli and the foot of the Kamakhya hill. The sand bank was known as Andharubali in between the places. There was a landing station for boats at the foot of the Kamakhya hill known as Amarajulighat. A rampart was made along the Andharubali. Opposite to the Kamakhya hill on the north bank there was Aswakranta hill. These three places constituted a regular triangle on the river waters of the Brahmaputra. Ram Singh proposed to enter Guwahati by the breach of the rampart at Andharubali with a detachment of his cavalry, by carrying his men and horses in both across the river.[62]

In this critical juncture Chakradhwaj Singh, the king of Assam, breathed his last in April 1670 A.D. His overwhelming sense of self-respect and patriotism was mainly responsible in restoring to his country its lost prestige and glory. He was succeeded by his brother Udayaditya Singha. With the change of kingship Ram Singh pressed his demands much more insistently than before but he found that all his negotiations futile and ineffective. He was now resolved to decide the issues by resuming offensive operations. Ram Singh after his victory at the Battle of Alaboi repeated his pressure on Barphukan to vacate Guwahati. He tried the method of rupture and gifts over the Assamese generals by adapting various unfair and tricky means. He tried to bribe the other officers to win over, spread rumours that the Barphukan had already taken bribe from him and thereby to effect a split in the leadership. But all these means could not deter the Assamese from their patriotic zeal and spirit of their loyalty. So he found no other means but to make definite attack at Guwahati. He had been repeatedly advised by his envoy Panditrai that there was no other possible venue for attack through the river Brahmaputra except by a slight opening in the rampart in the sand bank between the Barphukan's headquarter at Itakhuli and the foot of Kamakhya Hill i.e. through Andharubali and Amrajurighat at the foot of the Kamakhya hill on the south bank.[63]

Meanwhile Emperor Aurangzeb sent message to Ram Singh: "I have sent Ram Singh to fight with Assam and not to make

friends with the people there." To this Ram Singh replied: "I have not refrained from fighting; but it was proved useless. As there are no fields, fighting by spears, shields and guns is an impossible affair. The Assamese have erected an impenetrable wall of defence on both the banks. There is the possibility of our naval battle only."[64]

Ram Singh now decided to take the offensive operations by entering Guwahati by the breach at Andharubali and the news of illness of Barphukan which spread in Mughal camp as favourable omen encouraged him for immediate action. Five Mughal Captains including two Firinghees (European) fired their guns and shot their arrows from boats. The Assamese fleet then retreated to Amrajurighat. The Mughals on horse-back steered their boats towards Andharubali. The breach being repaired in the meantime the Mughals crossed over Juria on the north bank. The Assamese pursuing the Mogul fleet moored their boats at Aswakranta.[65]

The Barphukan was very ill and being deprived of his personal command the Ahoms did not entertain much hope of success. Some of them had already loaded their boats with a view to retreat. The commander at Aswakranta, a Hazarika of the Miri Sandikai family, asked the Barphukan to come to his rescue as his men were deserting their ranks. Lachit Barphukan sent the reply: "Tell your men I am going to die on this spot, and I never think of abandoning my charge. I have bought a slice of earth on the top of Chila Hill (i.e.

burial place) which will provide sufficient accommodation for my remains." A commander named Nara Hazarika rushed from Sindurighopa fort to Aswakranta, and knelt down before the retreating soldiers appealing not to retreat leaving the battle ground.[66]

The battle was progressing. Lachit from his sick-bed on the hill fort at Itakhuli was watching the movement of the boats of the rival sides. He felt that not a moment was to be lost, not a single movement on the river to be mis-calculated. Though he was extremely ill he proposed to rush upon the enemy, but his astrologer Achyutananda Doloi dissuaded the general from attack as the time was not auspicious for such action. This was the most critical moment in the life of Lachit Barphukan. Here was his army on the verge of annihilation and his country's independence lost for ever; and here was a warning from the scriptures that an engagement commenced at the moment was bound to be unsuccessful. He had already promulgated that no one should fire a gun or shoot an arrow before hearing the signal from general's artillery. But at the same time he could not refute the royal astrologer who were attached to his command. He waited for the verdict at the pitch of his nerves.[67]

On the appropriate moment as suggested by the astrologer Lachit Barphukan ordered his body-guard to carry him downsteps the boats on his bed-stead. Accompanied by six other war vessels and signalling through artillery fire Barphukan's battleship entered into the thickness of the river battle.

The promptness with which the Barphukan dealt with oarsmen produced consternation and terror in the hearts to his army. The rumour went out that the general having witnessed the flight of his soldiers had begun to kill men indiscriminately with his own hand, and to throw them into water. It spread like wild fire rousing the soldiers to sudden and courageous action. The Barphukan shouted at the pitch of his voice: "Let the Mughals capture me alive and let my peóple go home in peace!" Having fired volleys from his guns the general rushed with seven boats towards the enemy. The Assamese fleet on both banks on the river having seen the Barphukan approaching the fleet of the enemy, steered their barges towards those of the general. The Ahom soldiers discharged their guns and their arrows from the banks as well as from the boats. Rashid Khan, now confident of entering Guwahati through the breach at Andharubali, was enjoying his hookas on his boat with his back turned towards the Assamese. He was killed by a hostile bullet.[69]

The Victory

A terrible contest ensued between the two armies. The whole of Brahmaputra at the triangle between Kamakhya, Itakhuli and Aswakranta became littered with boats, and men struggling to escape drowning. The Ahoms erected an improviso bridge across the Brahmaputra by placing one boat after another over the whole breadth of the river. The Mughals could not stand the dash and fury of the Assamese onset. The Assamese were fighting for their life and liberty,

and the Mughals for mere luxury of a triumph and territorial expansion. Heavy casualties suffered by the invaders. Those who survived were chased away 3 miles down the scene. The Barphukan intended to chase them further, but the royal astrologer who was in the war boat with the general dissuaded. The combat came to an end, and it was a decisive victory for the Assamese.[70]

Notes

1. Sir J.N. Sarkar. History of Bengal, p. 345.
   S. Talish. Fathiya-i-Ibrayya, pp. 6-8.

2. P.N. Gohain. Purani Asam Buranji, pp. 116-117.
   Mirza M. Kazim. Alamgirnamah, pp. 676-679.
   S.K. Dutta. Asam Buranji, pp. 14-18.

3. Sir J.N. Sarkar. History of Aurangzeb, Vol.III, p.
   S. Talish, op.cit., pp. 25-26.

4. Ibid., pp. 6-8.
   P.N. Gohain. Purani Asam Buranji, p. 119.

5. S. Talish, op.cit., pp. 6-8.
   Mirza M. Kazim. Alamgirnamah, pp. 676-679.

6. Batavia Dogh Register, 1661, pp. 6, 43, 75, 238, 387.
   English Factories in India, Vol. XI, 1661-1664, pp. 68-70.
   Jagdish N. Sarkar. Life of Mir Jumla, p. 219.

7. Dutch Records of English Factories in India, Vol.XI, p.70.
   Jagdish N. Sarkar, op.cit., pp. 219-220.

8. English Factories in India, Vol. XI, pp. 294, 393.

9. Glanius. A relation of an Unfortunate Voyage to the
   Kingdom of Bangala, pp. 145-146, 167-168.

10. S. Talish, op.cit., pp. 7-8 and 18-19.
    Jagdish N. Sarkar, op.cit., p.

11. S. Talish, op.cit., pp. 3, 11.
    Mirza M. Kazim. Alamgirnamah, pp. 694,696.
    Glanius, op.cit., pp. 144-147, 167-168, 145-146, 148.
    E.A. Gait. History of Assam, pp. 127-128.

12. Sir J.N. Sarkar. History of Aurangzeb, Vol.III, pp.159-160.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

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27. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Atan Buragohain, p. 41.
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28. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Lachit Barphukan, pp. 17-25.
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38. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Lachit Barphukan, p. 27.

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60. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Lachit Barphukan, pp. 68-69.

61. Ibid., p. 73.

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Lachit Barphukan, p. 77.

65. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Lachit Barphukan, pp. 78-79.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid., pp. 80-81.

68. Ibid., p. 82.

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CHAPTER VII

THE AFTERMATHS

Being defeated in the battle of Saraighat, Raja Ram Singh withdrew in 1671 to Rangamati and encamped himself there till 1676. The prolonged haltage of Ram Singh at Rangamati after retreat from war and without any activities create some mystery. He was neither called back nor asked to renew the Assam Campaign by the Emperor.[1]

It is possible that the Emperor intended to reinforce the detachments under Ram Singh as soon as the Marathas were subdued. As this did never happen and in 1670s the hostilities of the Marathas attained a serious magnitude against the Mughals, Ram Singh had to be called back abandoning the hope of immediately recapturing the ceded territories from the Ahoms.[2]

In Assam since the death of Chakradhwaj Singh in 1670 in a short space of eleven years (i.e. 1670-1681) there had been no less than seven kings, not one of whom had died a natural death. Conspiracy, intrigues and over-ambitions amongst the selected officers became the order of the day. One Debera Barbarua coming up from an insignificant house had become the master conspirator who was responsible for the assassination of as many as three kings.[3] When Debera Barbarua was acting with unlimited power of king-maker and

destroyer, the other Dangarias i.e. the Phukans, the Rajkhowas and the Hazarikas consulted the Prime Minister Atan Buragohain who was still in Guwahati concentrating himself for erecting a permanent defensive system against the intruders. They requested him to save the country and the people from the atrocities perpetrated under the behest of Debera. Buragohain accompanied by Laluk Sola Barphukan and other Phukans, Baruas, Hazarikas and Saikias marched to Upper Assam. Debera encountered the Saraighatias or the officers from Guwahati in a battle at Bahgara. He was defeated and captured and after the trial was killed at Rajahat, being hoed from head to foot by the Haris.[4]

Buragohain and his followers after consultation removed the protege king installed by Debera and made the Dihingia prince Arjun, the king in 1674 A.D. All the high ranking officers offered the crown to Atan Buragohain but he declined saying that "I am a minister and so I cannot be a king" since kingship was a privilege only to royal blood.[5]

Barphukan returned to Guwahati after having placed the affairs of the capital on a systematic basis. But soon there took place conflict between the king and Buragohain whom the former thought to be the superpower. A fight ensued between the two parties. Buragohain won the contest and the king and his four sons were killed. Anarchy prevailed. Buragohain looked after the affairs for some time. Another prince was selected by Buragohain and made king with the

consent of the counseller. He assumed the name of Sudaipha.[6]

Sudaipha dismissed one Mecha Barbarua from service for having married a princess by Mecha who did not belong to royal blood. After some time an attack was made on the king in 1678 A.D. in the darkness of night. The king was saved after sustaining injuries but the assassin escaped. Buragohain and other Dangarias suspected Mecha for the offence and a large number of other officers suspected to be in collision dismissed from services.[7]

Meanwhile differences surfaced between the Buragohain and Barphukan. The Barphukan, his brother Bhatdhara and the younger son of Duara met at Kaliabar. They were joined by some other officers from Guwahati. They discussed the situation and decided: "It now transpires that we shall all be undone having placed our reliance upon the Buragohain. It is God alone who has saved us somehow. If we depend upon others' help something disastrous may come upon us, while no harm can proceed from any quarter if we are strong." The Barphukan then despatched three men to Nawab Mansur Khan through Baduli who played the role of a traitor helping the Mughal against his own country at the time of Mir Jumla's invasion. The messengers put before the Nawab, "The Barphukan has sent us with this message: Please arrange the appearance of some two hundred horses on the north and south banks at Sarai, and some twenty boats on the waters, and we shall abandon the garrison of Guwahati and proceed upstream. But

I shall have to be made King of Assam in return." The Nawab sent the messengers to Dhaka with his men to meet Azamtara, son of the Padshah. Azamtara vowed to fulfil the desire of the Barphukan.[8]

The plot was divulged to Sudaipha, who at once took steps to frustrate it. He hastily raised an army and divided it into two parts, one of which was stationed at Chintamani to raise a fort, while the other was sent down-stream to resist the advance of the Muhammedans. But it was too late to save Guwahati, which was surrendered to the Muhammedans by the Barphukan early in March 1679.[9] This bloodless occupation of Guwahati effected by the Mughal with the help of Baduli who removed all fears from Mughal contingents of Assamese reprisal. After surrendering Guwahati fort in a friendly manner the Barphukan sailed upstream and arrived at Kaliabar where he assumed independence and began to dismiss and appoint officers.[10]

Having heard all this the king ordered the three Dangarias to leave the Chintamanigarh half constructed and proceed to Guwahati. Barphukan and his supporters of Saraighat met the Dangarias at Biswanath. Barphukan arrested all the loyal officers including Atan Buragohain, the prime minister, whom he detained at Kaliabar.[11] King Sudaipha playing some strategum tried to capture Barphukan but all his attempts were in vain. Finally the king was also captured along with many other officers. The king was executed by the

Barphukan. The Barphukan then fetched one Saru Gohain a prince of the Samuguria family, aged only fourteen years and made him king. The king was known as Lara Raja due to his young age. The Barphukan's daughter aged five years became his chief queen.[12]

Atan Buragohain who was imprisoned at Kaliabar was murdered along with his family at the instance of the Barphukan. He now occupied the position recently held by the Buragohain and before him by Debera Barbaruah. But undeterred by their fate, he resolved not merely, as they had done, to exercise the power, but also to assume the rank of king. It is said that he communicated his design to the Emperor of Delhi, who sent a reply conveying his approval, but whether this be true or not, there is no doubt that he openly asserted his equality with the king and clothed himself in garments which the latter alone was allowed to wear. But his triumph was short-lived. His overweening arrogance set the other nobles against him and he was assassinated. His three sons and two of his brothers shared the same fate. Bhatdhara Phukan, his third brother, who was at Kaliabar, 'saved his life by a timely flight to Muhammedan territory, where he tried to induce the local officials to give him troops to avenge his brother's death. Though he obtained encouragement from Prince Muhammad Azam, but due to the lack of strong force under the disposal of Bhatdhara, the plan did not succeed. In order to prevent further conspiracies, Lara Raja determined to maim or kill all possible rivals of

the royal family. In the process except prince Gadapani who had been living in concealment near Rani in Kamrup, in the house of a Garo woman wearing the garb of a common peasant and working in the field like ordinary cultivator, were mutilated. The cause of Gadapani was espoused by the Dangarias due to the incapacity and utter want of aptitude for public business by Lara Raja. In July 1681 Lara Raja was killed and Gadapani assuming the Ahom name Supatpha and Hindu name Gadadhar Singh became the king of Assam.[13]

The first act of the king was to recapture Guwahati by ousting the Mughals. He consulted the three Dangarias and other nobles and commanded them to attack the Bangals at Guwahati. A well organized force under the leadership of all the high dignitaries, i.e. Gargayan Dungaria, Dilihial Langi Buragohain, Cheng Khan Solal Gohain, Dilingis Bar-baruah, etc., was sent to attack the Muhammedans. The fort of Bahbari and Kajoli fell at the first assault and a great naval victory was gained near the mouth of Barnadi, the whole of enemy's fleet falling into the hands of the Assamese. This misfortune paralysed the fouzdar of Guwahati - Mansur Khan. He fled without offering any further resistance to the advancing Ahoms, who pursued them as far as Manas. A vast amount of booty including gold, silver, cannons, guns were captured at Itakhuli. They also secured plenty of money, men, horses, camels, bullocks and buffaloes. The spoils obtained in this engagement exceeded the amount captured in any other previous warfare. Bhatdhara Phukan, who had

attempted to incite the Muhammedans to invade Assam, was captured with his son, and an awful punishment was inflicted upon him. His son was killed and he was compelled to eat his flesh, after which he was also put to death. A Muhammedan spy, who was caught, was taken round the camp and shown all the dispositions of the Ahom commanders, and was then killed. This was the last Muhammedan war (1682) in Assam.*14

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* The reconquest of Guwahati by Mughals was briefly mentioned in Maasir-i-Alamgiri. No Muslim accounts could be found about this last war. Only the Buranji records the events.

Notes

1. G.C. Baruah, Ahom Buranji, pp. 217-218.
2. S.C. Dutta. The Northeast and the Mughals, pp. 120-121.
   G.C. Baruah, op.cit., pp. 216-217.
3. E.A. Gait. History of Assam, p. 166.
   P.N. Gohain. Asamar Buranji, p. 64.
4. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Tungkhungia Buranji, pp. 6-7.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 8.
7. Ibid., p. 9.
8. Ibid., p. 10.
9. E.A. Gait. History of Assam, p. 164.
   Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Tungkhungia Buranji, pp. 10-11.
10. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, op.cit., pp. 11-12.
11. Ibid., p. 12.
12. Ibid., p. 13.
13. Ibid., pp. 13-17.
    E.A. Gait. History of Assam, pp. 165-166.
14. E.A. Gait. History of Assam, pp. 166-167.
    Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Tungkhungia Buranji, pp. 118-119.

CHAPTER VIII

ASSAMESE PEOPLE AND MILITARY SYSTEM

It can be established from various historic and pre-historic records that the military prowess of the Assamese people was of very high order. According to Doobi Grant Balavarmen I endured firelike arrows in the battle-field and conquered his enemies. King Bhaskarvarmana vanquished a number of kings in battle. The role played by king Bhaga-datta in the Mahabharata war was of very high order. That no imperialist during any period of Indian history could subdue this land despite repeated attacks speaks volume of the ability and organizational skill of the Assamese. This tradi-tion of successful resistance was inherited by the ruler and the people till the end of the Muslim period of the Indian history. Occasional debacle against continued attempt of insubordination may be assigned as a step for refuelling for the next run.

Armed Force Organization

As mentioned in the Arthashastra (VI.I) of six kinds of troops consisting of maula (hereditary), bhrtaka (hired), sreni (guild army), mitra (ally), amitra (enemy), and atari (forest), there are no details of any of them.[1]

The division of army in Assam was of traditional four-fold. The Nidhanpur Grant (L. 1-2) mentions that Bhaskara's

army camp at Karnasubarna consisted of splendid ships, elephants, horses and infantry. The records, however, do not indicate that cavalry was greatly used during Pala line of kings and in Ahom periods. Muslim historians used to refer that the Assamese soldiers were frightened by the imperial horses. The infantry of Assam said to be much more skilful even to trap the cavalry. Elephantry formed an important part of the Assamese fighting force. The abundance of elephants in the forests of Assam is evident from all records. But the Assamese earned definite superiority in naval warfare. The mighty Brahmaputra and large number of rivers of Assam certainly contributed in this naval ability. Besides, the rich forest of Assam made it possible to utilize the best variety of timbers in boat/ship making while the recurring floods made the people extremely used to water. Even the English, French, Dutch and Portuguese sailors who were hired by the Mughal invaders in their Assam expedition could not match the Assamese sailors in naval warfare. Equally the Assamese infantry earned high amount of appreciation even from the invading forces. In the guerrilla technique of warfare they made enemy's life miserable. The mountainous character of the land helped in the construction of forts which along with other natural barriers played an important part against external invasions. After examining all aspects of political, economic, strategic issues the king in council would determine the objectives of the incoming confrontation and the armed force officers would be

properly briefed about it. The actual fighting was undertaken after religious sacrifices and on the auspicious moment as would be suggested by royal astrologers of high reputation. It appears that a vast standing army was not regularly maintained by the rulers. But at the time of emergency entire nation could be mobilized to meet the enemy. This is an indication to the concept of nation in arms. Most of the types of weapons used by the other parts of India, used by the Assamese soldiers. Records say that the Assamese were expert archers using poison in arrow tips. The manufacture of gun powder during Ahom period is proved by a number of authorities. P.R.T. Gordon writes that the Khasis knew the art of manufacturing gun powder from saltpetre, sulphur and charcoal. Travernier in his Assam travel observed that the people of Assam in ancient time invented gun powder and guns used to be exported from Assam to Pegu and from Pegu to China. From China it went to other parts of the world thereby giving the Chinese the credit of inventor of gun powder.[2]

Shihabuddin Talish mentioned that the weapons of war of the Assamese were matchlocks, cannon, arrows with or without iron heads, short swords, spears and long (bows) and crossbows. In time of war all the inhabitants of the kingdom had to go to battle, whether they wished it or not.[3]

<u>Skill Displayed</u>

When Bakhtiyar Khilji attempted to invade Kamrup after his uncompleted Tibetan Campaign not a blade of grass or a

stick of firewood could be found on the way as the inhabitants along his route set fire to them. Not a pound of food or blade of grass could be found for their horses and cattle; and his followers had to kill their horses and eat them for their survival. When he reached the stone bridge on the Brahmaputra his followers found the arches of bridge destroyed. He was therefore compelled to take shelter in a temple and as soon as the Kamrup king realized the helpless position of the Muslim army he gave orders to his soldiers to build a stockade round the temple. The Muslim at last asked counsel from their leaders saying thus: 'if we remain like this we shall die falling into the traps of this infidels'. Then making rush and attacking one corner of the stockade they made their way out, but the Kamrup soldiers followed them and destroyed the whole army including Bakhtiyar Khilji.[4]

Ikhtyar Uddin Yuzback Tughril Khan invaded Kamrup in the spring of 1257 A.D. In his victorious march he met resistance neither from the king nor from his vassals. The Kamrup king in fact evacuated and had taken shelter in a hill. But the king from the hiding place directed his people to take steps so that the enemy could not buy foodgrains from anywhere after the harvesting was over. They were asked either to store grains in secret store or to export them to the neighbouring place thereby to create food crisis in enemy camp at the commencement of monsoon. The king made a number of water reservoirs in higher land and hill not far off from his capital where now Tughril Khan made his headquarter.

Drinking water used by the Muslims was polluted to make them unhygienic. Continuous rain and thunder storms started continuing several weeks. There was acute scarcity of food, not even available to buy nearby, polluted water created epidemic. Under this critical condition the Assam king let loose water from the reservoirs creating artificial flood. The Assamese now jumped upon the enemies and butchered the whole army.[5]

The following passage by Mirza Nathan in Baharistan-i-Ghaybi throws light: "On that very night the Chiefs of the Raja of Assam, came to fight arranging their armies in this order - the Burhagohain at the one hilly and jungly bank of the Brahmaputra, leaving the hillock of the Sultan Ghiyasuddin Awliya to his right and the temple of Kedar to his left in order to attack and finish Quliz Khan, Mirza Nathan and those who were inside the fort of Hajo. Hati Baruah, Raja Baldev and Shumaryad Kayeth with a force of two hundred thousand infantry, one hundred and eighty elephants consisting of mast* and husiar mast were to go along with him by the other side of the river in order to fall upon Shyakh Kamal to sweep him off and not allow even a bird to fly, out of the cordon by charge from the rear. The Raj-khowa and the Kharghuka (Khargharia Phukan) were to take

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* Mast means heated or at the pitch high of matching period. The elephants who have not yet come to the state of mast or heat - there was a particular herb found in Assam called sarfil which when administered to the elephants make them mast within eight prahars. Mast elephant becomes wild and can be skilfully directed to carry out destruction. Husiar mast means yet to be sexually aroused.

the command of the fleet consisting of four thousand war boats, of the class of mound, bachari and kus in order to attack the fleet of the twelve Bhuyans who were loyally supporting the imperialists to seize them and not allow any of them to escape by the river with his fleet. The eighteen hill Rajas who sided with the Assamese rebelled against the imperialist were to take their position with all their hill men on the bank of the river to the left of their fleet in order to aid it and not to allow anybody to escape towards the Dakhinkul. One thousand war boats were sent to the mouth of the river Row Rowa to the rear of the imperial army in order to block the passage of ration and communication from Jahangirnagar alias Dhaka during the days of the siege. In short the imperial army was brought to bay like games in hunt."[6]

The military system of the Ahoms derived its efficiency from the maximum utilization of all available resources of the country such as its manpower, its economic strength,* its strategic advantages, the religious sentiments of the

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* When the Mughal General Mir Jumla occupied Garhgaon the Ahom Capital in March 1662 he was able to seize there among other things, nearly three lakhs of rupees worth of gold and silver, 82 elephants and 170 large store-houses, each containing from one to ten thousand maunds of rice. The inhabitants were found to be in the habit of storing in their houses one year's supply of food of all kinds, since there was no practice of grain trading in the kingdom.

Dr. Amalendu Guha. The Ahom Political System: An Enquiry into the State Formation Process in Medieval Assam. Occasional Paper No. 64, p. 5. Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

people and even their superstitions. With the help of one organization as based on perpetual vigilance and preparedness, added with the diplomacy of a high order, the Ahoms maintained their sway over the Brahmaputra valley in almost uninterrupted manner for six hundred years; and successive generals of the invading forces — Afghan, Mughal and later on the Burmese — expressed their unstinted admiration of the fighting metal of the Assamese, their versatility and their ability to shrink their differences in the face of a national ordeal.[7]

A ready militia was always available for quick mobilization and 'paiks' took their respective duties under their respective captainship of the Phukans, Rajkhowas, Baruahs, Hazarikas, Saikias and Borahs. The cooperation of the neighbouring tribal men also greatly helped the war operation of the Ahoms.[8]

The Ahoms were fearless in facing the situation created by any war. They rather became more active by rendering patriotic services in every phase of administration and productive aspect of the country. Thus the production of war equipments and food provision were equally carried on war footing. The activities of the dockyards and arsenals became prompt. The surrounding area of the Ahom palace was covered by the factories run by a band of expert smiths who made muskets, cannons, swords, spears and arrows. Even the monarch himself supervised the Workshops in addition to imparting of the training directions to the new recruits.[9]

War preparation used to be made with utmost sincerity and earnestness. At the time of fortification of Guwahati General Lachit Barphukan entrusted his maternal uncle with responsibilities of completing of a rampart near Amingoan. As the work was not finished within the fixed time, Lachit executed his uncle saying "My uncle is not greater than my country". This sternness produced the desired effect upon the army and averted all possibilities of slackness and delinquency.[10]

On Ram Singh's arrival at Rangamati the Ahom Commanders stationed at Manaha attempted to oppose the advance of the enemy. There were a few skirmishes, but the Assamese could not attain any success. The Barphukan realized the futility of opposing the enemy at the outlying forts on the frontiers, and adopted a new objective in the plan of his defensive measures. The Barphukan in order to lure the invaders into the war zone of Guwahati, surrounded by hill on all sides with forts and garrisons at regular intervals, despatched three Rajkhowas to Manaha to seduce the enemy into the neighbourhood of Guwahati. Ram Singh entered unopposed the water of Assam and the absence of resistance on the part of the Assamese was attributed by Ram Singh to their inaction and fear. The detachment of the Rajkhowas sailed up the river remaining within sight of Ram Singh's army but outside the range of the Mughal cannon. At night the Rajkhowas encamped on the river banks. Trunks of plaintain trees were posted in their camps with torches on

them. Early in the morning the Assamese contingence boarded their boats and resumed their sailings in advance of Ram Singh's fleet, thus giving impression of the retreat of a vast army. Ram Singh flattered himself by thinking that he was as fortunate as his predecessor Mir Jumla in having an easy march up the river Brahmaputra.[11]

Even expert like Mir Jumla who was always meticulous in every step used to be embarrassed numbers of time. When he planned to capture the impregnable fort Simlagarah on his march to Gargoan he wanted a few professional spies to discover the route to the fort. Without delay the person who said to be an Assamese new Muslim who had defected to the Mughal side and gained confidence of Mir Jumla claimed his knowledge of the route and offered to guide the invading party. Mir Jumla approved his appointment as the guide of the party led by Dilir Khan. After marching through the difficult route in the darkness of the night when the party arrived at an undulating position the Assamese guide made a shriek indicating that the Mughals were at the firing range of the Assamese. The Assamese from their hiding position at once attacked the Mughals and annihilated them. This betrayal was revenged by a Mughal soldier by chopping the head of the Assamese.[12]

On the north side of the river Dihing from the proximity of Trimohini and Gajpur to the environs of Lakhau the Ahom prevented the arrival of provisions to the Mughal army. The discomfiture of a naval escort to Tiok and beyond so

emboldened the Assamese that the transport of Mughal merchant ships was suspended, involving the stoppage of arrival of provision. As the floods of the Dihing and the torrents from the hills of Salpani froze the movements of the Darabadis and the cavalry and infantry of Miana Khan, the Ahoms crossed the river and descending from the hill, began to surround and even to invest Garhgoan, heroically defended by Murtaza without any hope of reinforcements. An Ahom host 10 to 12 hundred strong under the nephew of Bargohain, hopelessly outnumbered Ghazi Khan, thanadar of Deopani, but after the fall of its leader there were constant skirmishes between Assamese and Mughals.[13]

Punishment

At the battle of Bharali due to the carelessness and negligence of Ahom General Chaolai who was the uncle of the King Pratap Singha, a Mughal soldier killed several of Assamese fighters. The king later on executed Chaolai for this fault.[14]

Severe punishment used to be given to the Assamese officials if they were found asking any favour or receiving any gift from the enemies. Jayananda,the son of Bhelai Duaria, the commander of the border outpost was found to accept a necklace from the Mughal Fouzdar Ahlyar Khan promising to supply him elephant. Jayananda was given severe punishment. In another occasion an Assamese envoy Kalia Kataki was found to have accepted a few articles as gift from

the Mughal general Sattrajit. King Pratap Singha was extremely anguished hearing the news. After proper verification Kalia Kataki was beheaded on the charge of breach of trust.[15]

If someone was found betraying the country and the king, he was given death penalty along with his entire family. Two high dignitaries of Ahom, Akhek Gohain and Kero Gohain defected to the Koch king Parikshit and later on to Mughal General Makram Khan. Both of them at a very critical time returned to Assam and conveyed to the king valuable secret information of the Mughal camp. Even then also they were not spared. On the charge of breach of trust both of them were killed along with their families.[16]

The Ahom King did not tolerate if anyone used to make a overstep in the political affair. Sonari Mudoi, Jaihari Mudoi and Narahari Mudoi, the renowned merchants of Assam, were issued licence to carry out trade and commerce with the Mughal. They, of their own, made a deal with the Mughal Fouzdar offering their help in the establishment of friendship with the Ahom king. Accordingly the Nawab of Dhaka with a consignment of valuable gifts sent two Mughal envoys to Assam with the Mudois. They arrived at Kurua from where message was sent to the King informing about their mission and asking permission to have interview with the king. The Ahom King Pratap Singh was extremely annoyed with the Mudois for this of their non-commercial activities without prior royal approval. He ordered that the Mudois along with their

entire entourage of Mughal envoys to be beheaded and their dead bodies to be sent back on a plaintain raft by the river.[17]

Deviation from one's own responsibility and overriding the jurisdiction of others were never tolerated by the king. Barguru Kataki sent a message to Pratap Singh that he received an information that the Mughals were making preparation for a large scale expedition against Assam. In fact this information should have been sent to the King by Bhelai, the officer responsible of lower Assam affairs. When the matter was enquired by the King from Bhelai the latter informed him that the information was without any base. He also suggested that Barguru Kataki overstepped his own jurisdiction and therefore was liable for punishment. The king issued death penalty to Barguru Kataki.[18]

After the return of Mir Jumla the first act of the Ahom king was to despatch Aton Burhagohain the prime minister of the country to different parts of the country for restoring order and morale and to gather fugitive subjects. The king then instructed his father-in-law Khamun Rajmantri Phukan to punish all those who tended to be unfaithful during the invasion of Mir Jumla. A number of Ahom nobles were punished accordingly, some were chained with iron fetters, some were whipped while the others were dismissed from office. Barukial Langi Bargohain who had failed to send reinforcement to the southern army was beaten by the king himself with a blunt

sword.[19] The principal offender Chengmum Barphukan, who wilfully desisted from fighting owing to the appointment of a non-Ahom as C-in-C of lower Assam and who subsequently helped the Mughal to advance by secretly sending Assamese guide, afraid of his humiliation committed self-immolation.[20]

However, the monarch was advised to be restrained in giving punishment. Rajmantri Phukan advised the king: "When a few hair of the head are grey it behoves one to pluck them out. But when the whole head is grey, whoever thinks of that painful operation".[21] This advice indicated that due to the flight of the king at the time of Mir Jumla's invasion the people were demoralized and many neglected their duties and turned towards Mughal to secure their favour. For this fault of theirs all of them should not be punished.[22]

Most severe and drastic punishment was the answer from the Assamese king against the attempted coup d'etat. The conspirators along with their relatives used to be tortured and executed after their charges were proved. In Lakli Ringamut a plot was made by the following persons to revolt against the king: Gohain Tamuli, his brother Acheng Gohain, Maran Baruah, Madhu Hazarika, grand son of Mani Konwar and Anupam. The king got the plotters arrested along with all their relations and imparted severe torture. The flesh of son roasted and forced his father to eat. Flesh from different parts of the body slashed and fried in oil and offered to each other. With an axe the breast of one of the

plotters was opened in the presence of the other to take out the heart which was cooked and offered to the plotters. Bargohain was confined in the elephant stable. Later on all of them were killed.[23]

Martial Zeal of Ahoms

The indigenous military system was made equally efficient under the organization of the Ahoms who had conquered Assam in the 13th century. Besides the regular forces the Ahoms kept ready for service a standing militia, composed of all the secular adult male members of the country and conscription was in the very blood of the normal system of government under which an army could be mobilized at a short notice, its number being determined by the exigency of the situation.[24] The Assamese legions were composed not only of the Aryan settlers in the Brahmaputra valley, but also the primitive tribes living in the neighbourhood with some of whom war and bloodshed were a daily recreation.[25]

The Ahoms were a hardy race of demon worshippers eating beef and fowl and drinking spirituous liquor, with the Burmese expertness in building stockades and bamboo bridges, plying boats and making night attacks. They were feudally organized under a number of noblemen. The nobles contributed to the state slave labour. The entire adult male population was liable to military services. Their army consisted entirely of foot soldiers, stiffened by elephants, on which rode their captains. The men were ferocious in their

manners and brutal in temper but possessed great bodily strength, power of endurance and fearlessness, making rapid marches and showing an enterprising spirit in war. They were afraid of horses but a land of jungles, nalas and quagmires, with few roads was not suited to cavalry.[26]

The king was the patriarch of the clan; he decided questions of social precedence and caste purity, made religious sacrifices for the good of the entire tribe and was venerated as a semi-divine being and custodian of the tutelary god of the tribe (Somdeo); Ahom punishments were draconic, men being put to death with torture for slightest fault and even at the mere caprice of the king. Women, no doubt, enjoined freedom of movement, and lived unveiled but polygamy was the general practice, wives being regarded as mere chattels and changing owners, even in the royal family. Cruelty and sensuality were the vices of the Ahom kings, but this fact does not seem to have impaired their military efficiency.[27]

Diversity

The weak point of the Ahom kingdom was its diversity of population. The dominant race was the Ahoms, whom the Muhammedan historians called true Assamese with high qualities. The middle stratum of the population was composed of the Assamese proper - plainsmen with many Bengal affinities, defective in physical strength, endurance and martial spirit. At the bottom of the society lay a vast body of slaves,some

being Mongoloid serfs but most being Bengali prisoners of war. These last were unwilling dwellers in the land, and at the first shock of foreign invasion rose against their masters.[28]

Geographical Factor

The geographical factors also helped in adding strength to the fighting genius of the people. Closely surrounded in the north, east and south by rugged hills where the slopes were held by savage tribes, Assam was practically impervious to attack from these directions. But it was not so well protected in the west, where it merged in the plains of north Bengal. From the Koch Bihar side, invasions had been easily conducted into the north Brahmaputra valley, and the armies had also sometimes marched into Assam from Dhaka by following the left bank of the Brahmaputra and turning the extreme western end of the Garo hills. But any hostile army operating in lower Assam invariably depended for its success and ever for its very life on the support of a strong flotilla of war boats. If it loses the command of the water highway, it was crushed between the river in the north and savage haunted hills of the south. Dhaka was too far off and the way to it was too circuitous for any re-inforcement to be set up from it by land in time.[29]

The Muslim historians very often referred to the hostile "air and water" of Assam to be most deadly to the Muslim forces. The question arises why then this hostile

"air and water" did not effect equally the Ahoms who were also new comers in the 13th and 14th centuries? However, the superiority of the Ahom soldiers must be admitted as Muslim chroniclers numbers of time said that one Ahom soldier could keep ten Mughal soldiers at bay. The pestilence which devasted the garrison of Mir Jumla spread equally all round the country. During monsoon no warfare was possible in a country like Assam with its heavy rainfall. The daring night attacks which the Assamese incessantly launched against Mir Jumla even during this season speaks volumes as to their dogged perseverance and their love for independence. They were, no doubt as rightly stated by Sir J.N. Sarkar, "a nation in arms". During Mir Jumla's expedition they had to fight against picked troops from all parts of India including Rajputs, Sikhs and Mughals who were much better mounted and carried very much better arms, all served by superior commissarate arrangement which consisted of caravans, mules, camels, elephants and pack-ponies. The Ahoms had none of these advantages. They were all barefooted soldiers armed with bows and arrows, swords, spears, field-pieces and matchlocks. In spite of all these advantages the Muslims failed at every attempt and all these failures cannot be ascribed entirely to natural difficulties or to pestilence, floods or earthquakes. Nor they can be ascribed to the inferiority of the Muslim armies in warfare or to their weakness in numbers, military equipments or generalship. It was the courage and tenacity of the Assamese, impelled by

their strong love of independence which led them to ultimate victory.[30]

Role of Woman

Even the Assamese ladies also used to play active role in the defence of the country. The prevailing custom of Assam was that when the male folk would go to war the ladies used to make the fighting uniform by their own hand within the previous night. This uniform considered to be an auspicious armour. When Frashenmung Borgohain went to war against the Muslim expedition led by Turbak, his wife Mula Gabharu failed to prepare the dress in time. The result was, her husband fell in the war. Mula Gabharu was extremely pained with the news. She along with five other ladies determined to join the war to atone for her failings. They fought in the war heroically creating terror in the minds of the Muslim force. They killed many enemies finally getting themselves killed in the battle.[31]

Espionage

The espionage system of the Ahoms was highly efficient. The spies were always vigilant and busied themselves in collecting informations about the designs of the enemies, neighbours and their own officials and responsible persons. Resources and strength of the enemy had to be assessed meticulously. The information collected to be properly verified before passing on to the appropriate authority. Usually the Ahoms preferred to appoint the intelligent Brahmin as

emissaries and envoys who very often guided the espionage network. The Ahom princesses who were given in marriage to the Mughals and other neighbouring rulers helped in supplying intelligence to the king.[32]

Compliment from Invader

Highest compliments were paid to the Assamese by two royal ladies of Amber i.e. mother of Ram Singh and his wife when they heard Ram Singh's appointment for Assam expedition. They wrote to him: "We have heard that there (Assam) is universal Nama-Kirtana, that cows, Brahmans and Vaisanavas are living there in peace and harmony. By invading that country how long Mir Jumla thrived?" Ram Singh himself took Guru Tegh Bahadur with him in the expedition to secure morale encouragement against the devout Assamese.[33]

On termination of hostilities Ram Singh explained his discomfiture by pointing to the unsurpassing leadership of the Barphukan, the intricate character of the fortification, versality and courage of the Assamese. "Glory to the King! Glory to the counsellers! Glory to the commanders! Glory to the country! One single individual leads all the forces! Even I Ram Singh being personally on the spot, have not been able to find any loophole and opportunity! Every Assamese soldiers are expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches and in weilding guns and cannons. I have not seen such specimens of versality in any other part of India."[34]

Watching the courage, vigilance and military craft of the Assamese, Mulla Davish of Herat who accompanied Mir Jumla during his Assam Campaign had celebrated the bravery of the Assamese people in an elegant Ode :

"The Rajas of Assam brought to the field an army
Whose large number became a cage on earth;
Tumult-raising and sudden (in attack) like the eyes of the fair sex,
Hurling arrows and missiles and making a (firm) stand in battle field,
Their bodies full of life, they robbed lives on plains and hill.

All of them were terrific, like the demon Ifrit in the river
If one of them made charge on the battle field,
Their bodies would be severed from their heads and their heads from the bodies (before they lift it)
They seem to be Ahrimans come out of hill,
Or some heart that has escaped from the chains of captivity,
They are strong-lived to such a degree that if they are turned to dust
Their veins do not become the least slack.

All of them are without light like the eye-balls of the blind,
All of them are like poisonous plants in quality and effect."[35]

Administrative Organization

The Ahom Government was a monarchical oligarchy. The king or Swargadeo, as he was called, was supreme head of the state; and all honours, titles, offices, decisions, and war-measures, emanated from him. But he had to act according to the advice of the three hereditary councillors of state, the Buragohain, the Bargohain and Barpatragohain. The duty of selecting a king from among the members of the existing princely families was vested in these three nobles, and if united they could dethrone or execute a monarch. A powerful sovereign could override the decisions of the three Gohains, and similarly an astute Gohain could impose his will upon his two colleagues and the vast body of Phukans and Baruas. The Barbaruah was the head of the executive and the judiciary, but he could not act independently of the three Gohains. Any matter placed before the king by Barbaruah would be considered in the presence of the three Gohains, and if it was one of great moment the Phukans and Baruas would also be summoned to express their opinion.[36]

The Barphukan lived at Guwahati as the king's deputy and administered the territory from Kaliabar to the frontier of Mughal India. He conducted the diplomatic negotiations with Bhutan and frontier chieftains. The other frontiers of the kingdom were protected from the inroads of the hill people by several wardens like the Sadiya-Khowa Gohain, the Marangi-Khowa Gohain, the Salal Gohain, the Jagiyalia Gohain

and Kajalimukhia Gohain and they are always selected from the families of the three Gohains at the metropolis. The frontier tribesmen were allowed regular blackmail either in the shape of money, articles or servitors.[37]

The representation of the different Ahom families or faids was an important factor in the grant of appointments. The king had to be selected from the royal families. The families were Dihingia, Charingia, Tungkhungia, Namrupia, Samuguria and Parvatia. The members of the different princely dynasties sprang from their common ancestor Sukapha, and their settlement in different places occasioned by the expansion of their numbers led to the existence of the different faids. This was also the case with different branches of the Buragohain and Bargohain families. The Buragohain clans were: Teparatalia, Kuoigayan, Bahgaria, Langkakia, Moranpharia and Railungia; and those of Bargohain were Guimela, Parvatia, Pilinga, Mechagaria, Madurial, Kahugayan, Dihingia, Chatai-alia, Barukial and Miri Sandikai. The several Barpatra-gohain families were Nagapatra, Kenduguria, Kalugayan and Moranpatra. The Barbarua and the Barphukan were selected from the following families: Dihingia, Lahan, Sandikai, Duara, Ghora-Kowanr, Patar, Buragohain, Bakatial, Lukharakhan, Moran Barpatra, Langi, Chiring, Chetia, etc. For each of the top appointment hereditary line was fixed with the professed intention of established knowledge and tradition for deriving maximum efficiency.[38]

The adult population of Assam was divided into Khels having to render specific services to the state such as arrow-making, boat building, house building, provision supplying, fighting, writing, revenue collecting, superintendence of elephants, horses, hawks and forest, etc. Each Khel was placed in charge of a Phukan, a Rajkhowa or a Baruah who was assisted by gradation of officers like Hazarikas, Saikias and Boras. An adult male was called a paik and four paiks constituted a got. One man in a got had to serve the state for three months in a year, and the remaining three paiks looked after the cultivation and other domestic concerns of their absentee comrades. In cases of emergency two and even three men were recruited from each got for state purposes. The standing army in the Capital was not strong. In cases of war or other public occasions the officer-in-charge of the various Khels mobilized their respective quotas of men. The vast body of subjects was thus a standing militia and their loyal cooperation did not infrequently depend upon the personal sympathies of the intermediate Kheldars or barons.[39]

Succession to the throne was rather systematic in the beginning being based on the law of primogeniture, with occasional departures in favour of a brother or a nephew. Later on a powerful Gohain or a Barbarua could manoeuvre the support of his colleagues in placing on the throne any prince from the collateral branches and the rivals were disqualified by the mutilation of their limbs. The princes

who had no deformity in their body generally enlisted the support of some minister and made a dash for the throne.[40]

The Capital

The first Ahom conqueror Sukapha had stayed for some time at Solaguri, Habung and Simaluguri after which he fixed his headquarters at Charaideo in 1238 A.D. King Sudangpha shifted his Capital in 1403 A.D. to Cheregua on the Dihing river. Charaideo was relegated since then to the position of metropolis of the Ahom religion. Suklengmung ascended the throne in 1539 A.D. after having contrived the death of his father. Cheregua became reminiscent of his unholy patricide and it began to sting his monarchical conscience. He transferred the Capital to Gargaon and encircled it with a ring of walls and ramparts, which gave the name to the new city, Gargaon or the city of ramparts. The magnificence and splendour of Gargaon were an amazement to the Mughal invaders.[41]

Notes

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13. Jagdish N. Sarkar. Life of Mir Jumla, pp. 253-254 as quoted from Fatheya-i-Ibryya, pp.75-78, 89-91, 78-80.
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15. Ibid., p. 19.

16. Ibid., p. 21.

17. Ibid., p. 22.

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19. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan. Aton Buragohain, p. 18.

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21. H.C. Goswami. Purani Asam Buranji, p. 129.

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EPILOGUE

Assam or in broader term the present North East Frontier region of India has been a museum of anthropology due to the presence of multiple races of various ethnic stock. Besides Austric, Dravidian, Aryan and Mongloid, there emerged scores of sub-races both in the hilly tracts and Brahmaputra and Surama Valleys. Intermixing of blood between the main stocks perhaps resulted this multiplicity of sub-races developing into a political and territorial sectioning of the area. Presently many races have put up their claims both in plains and hills as the original inhabitants of the region in order to bargain territorial and political authorships. Without raising the questions whether these claims to be accepted or rejected it may be put that it is certainly an unhealthy omen if historical course of the region is not given a go-by.

Tribal States

Many a time it appears that the tribal divisions of people as may be found in the region was not a creation by man alone but to a great extent an imposition by nature or geographical factor. In the hills one tract is separated from the other by natural barriers as watertight compartment where a group of people living years together in this tract

develops a separate identity from the other. This compartmentalization was extremely minimum in the plains where geographical barrier was much less. In other words lack of communications between all sections of the people happened to be the main dividing line thereby creating scores of racial political units in the hills.

A question may be raised why then in historical period so many political kingdoms existed in the Brahmaputra Valley where communication hurdles were less? In ancient time entire Brahmaputra Valley was united though there might be some feudal landlords having their autonomous jurisdiction in some limited areas. In those days when divergent groups of people took shelter in Assam entering both from the east and west this arrangement of relegation of powers to certain heads suited well. Aryan Hindu dynasty was ruling in Assam till the attempted invasion of the country in Ikhtiyar Uddin Yuzback about 1256-57 A.D. The king who defeated Yuzback was one Hindu Aryan King Sandhiya (if Gurucarita of Ramacaran Thakura is to be believed). After this campaign he shifted his capital from Kamrup to Kamatapur. It is difficult to ascertain the cause of this shifting. But when the capital shifted from the centre of power to one corner of the kingdom it gave indulgence to the petty clanish chieftains to declare independence in their fiefdom. It can be convincingly assumed that this situation gave birth to the rise of the principalities like Bhuyans, Kacharis, Dhekeris, Koches, Khasi-Jayantias, 18 Hill Rajas

like Rani, Dumaria, Beltola, etc., in the Brahmaputra plains. At the same time Ahoms entered in Assam in 1228 A.D. and they were gradually rising to power defeating the rulers of these principalities as well as subjugating the tribes in the high hills like Nagas, Khamtis and their kinsmen, the Naras. They fought for about 400 years, Muslim invaders being their main enemy. Finally they emerged out to be most powerful political authority with the absence of which Assam's present political unification perhaps would have been something different. One advantage which the Ahom enjoyed was the spontaneous demand for the presence of a powerful political authority to defend the region from Muslim invaders because in place of many weak and small kingdoms one powerful kingdom was certainly more effective for strategical and tactical reasons. Ahom capitalized this situation by strengthening their defensive capability with offensive pretext wherever it was found to be expedient. Probably without the Turko-Afghan and Mughal expeditions turn of events in the political history of Assam would have been different. Unfortunately these ugly heads of clanish survivalism is again spearheading the Assam politics since last four years after the splits in 1963, 1972, 1973 when Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram took birth respectively as separate states inside the Indian Union dividing the existing unity of the region.

<u>'Live and Let Live'</u>

Internal rivalry and warfare in-between the tribal

groups happened to be the normal condition of life in the medieval period. For a trifle cause they used to pick up quarrel and fought. Whatever might be the cause of warfare, it is certain that all the contacts between the tribes used to be through this military confrontations. In the hilly tracts victory of one side did not mean merger of one's country with another. They fought to punish each other for some fault. Once this aim is fulfilled 'Live and let live' principle was followed. This finally resulted the survival of almost all the races and tribal groups. Even the Ahoms also adopted the policy of 'let others also live' once they secured the recognition of their overlordship. After the occupation of the region the British imperialism also followed the same pattern of policy by leaving the tribal peoples of their own by making the latter believe that there was a superior power over their head.

Significance of Military Contacts

In the life of North East Frontier the role of the Brahmaputra Valley has been always significant. This is the most fertile and resourceful region where ratio of population is much more than the hilly regions. This valley was first Aryanized — though the date of Aryanization cannot be accurately determined. Many scholars are of opinion that the Aryan-Kshatriyas (present Kalitas of Assam considered to be their descendants) settled down in the Brahmaputra Valley and ruled the region for hundred of years. They

maintained the Aryan Culture which ultimately influenced even the Ahom invaders. Though they were defeated politically and overthrown from power yet Aryan culture - with Hindu religious rituals, Sanskritized Assamese language and other polished norms of life remained as permanent features to be accepted by all sections. During Ahom period import of scholarly Brahmins from Kanauj by the kings further served the cause of Aryan cultural superiority. Indeed the Aryan culture unhesitatingly accepted the good conducts of life and society as was existed in the non-Aryan system. Until military confrontations took place between ancient Pragjyotish-Kamrup with the rest of India this Aryan culture was the only common link. In the prehistoric period there are accounts of war between Kamrup and rest of India. Lord Krisna with his Jadava Bahinis first defeated King Bhismak of Kundilnagar (Eastern Assam) to secure the Krisna-devoted daughter of the latter as his wife. Lord Krisna also attacked King Bana of Sonitpur (present Tezpur in middle Assam) to rescue his grandson Aniruddha along with his consort Usha - who was the daughter of Bana. King Bhagadatta joined the Mahabharata war on the side of Kaurava and died in fighting. King Shankaladipa in pre-historic period advanced upto Pundarvardhana and Samata thereby creating a sea outlet in the Bay of Bengal. King Bhaskarvarmana in seventh century A.D. joined Harshavardhana in defeating Sasanka of Bengal. Subsequently he joined the religious conferences of King Harsha in Kanauj and Prayag. The point

can be drawn from these accounts is that ultimately it was the military contacts which established link with Assam and rest of India and this process continued throughout the ages.

After Invasions

Attempt of Muslim subjugation of Assam started from the beginning of the thirteenth century with Bakhtiyar's expedition to conquer the land. But the attempt was a failure. Several other Turko-Afghan attempts and subsequent Mughal attempts also became failures. Some limited parts of the region close to the Muslim frontier of Bengal were brought under the administration of the Muslims for short duration. But surprisingly the repeated Muslim attacks on Assam from 13th century to 17th century A.D. could not significantly influence in the social and political system of the regions. To quote Dr. P.C. Choudhury: "While almost whole of India was subjugated by the Muslims, their invasions of Assam, beginning with that of Bakhtiyar, met with total failure. Muslim culture in fact was kept at arm's length until comparatively late times, and the Western culture crept into her body politic only during the middle of 19th century A.D. Nothing perhaps better explains this independent character of Assam's history than an appeal to her geography and none can draw a true picture of the character of the Assamese and aesthetic sense in particular, without due emphasis on the surroundings in which they live.

This independent nature of the people, distinguished by a sense of patriotism, if it may be so called, is a contribution to the fundamental cultural unity of India."

One important political development of Assam can be noted from the arrival of the Ahoms in the Assam since 1228 A.D. They had conquered the country by inches after fighting about 400 years. Though all the tribal neighbouring chieftains could not be brought under their direct administrative control, yet they put them down depriving the tribal chieftains' attempt to dominate over any part of Assam. This undoubtedly helped the formation of the present Assam as a united country amidst the greatest amount of racial diversities in the region. In the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley they brought all sections under full scale subordination not only by the use of military strength but also using their wise policy of total merger with the geographical, cultural and popular environments. Ahoms even showed their catholicity by rehabilitating quite a significant section of Muslim population who came as soldiers but was trapped in the land after getting defeated. This Muslim community still is contributing greatly in the Assamese culture and tradition. In the district of Nowgong there is a village named Lanka inhabited by Sikh community. Except their Sikhism, by custom, tradition and language they are Assamese farmers. The ancestors of these people came as Mughal soldiers. They were rehabilitated in Assam. They intermarry with the Assamese high caste claiming themselves to

be Kshatriyas. Ahoms followed surprisingly the same policy of Sakas, Hunas, Bactrian Greeks, Kushanas, etc., of getting fully absorbed in Indian culture and tradition forgetting their foreign identity thereby becoming local people of the land.

Muslim cultural impact in Assam is quite negligible. Even in present Kamrup and Goalpara where they established sarkar and paganans, except the religion followed by a limited section, nothing identical to be found worth mentioning of Mughal or Turko-Afghan culture. When visited a Muslim village of Dalibari in the district of Kamrup I found in all families only Hindu system of hospitality and food. Kabab, Pulao are unknown to them. Yet they claim that their ancestors came with Raja Ram Singha to fight against Assam. But after the defeat of Ram Singha they decided to stay on. This village is in the close proximity of Alaboi where a severe battle was fought between Ram Singh and Lachit Barphukan with heavy loss on Assamese side.

The Ahoms took another intelligent step of increasing their population in the country. This they did by intermarriage with the local clans and admitting them to their own faction and by using other conciliatory method. The king and royal family even married into the families of Kamatapur, Koch Bihar, Jayantia. With their bridal trains came Hindu priests, artisans and other skilled hands.

After their victory against the Pathans and Mughals

in several battles they captured huge store of cannons, muskets and other firearms to strengthen their position. Ahoms also manufactured their own guns and subsequently they used skilled hands of the captured soldiers. With the increasing confrontations with the Muslims, Ahoms gun-powder had attained a near perfection.

Weak Points

The weak points of the Assamese cannot be neglected. One major defect of their system may be said the lack of skill in the art of Government in earlier time. The king generally did not enjoy supreme power unless he was tactful and ambitious. The administrative machines used to be left in the hands of a few jealous and intriguing ministers and officers.

This resulted interregnums and court rivalry and even occasionally leading to the full control of the country by unscrupulous officers like Debera Barbaruah. Debera even managed to kill three kings in quick succession. Sometimes even in the hands of over-ambitious officer wise and great persons of the country had to be victims. One glaring example was Atan Buragohain. Atan Buragohain was one of wisest minister of Assam contributing greatly for Ahom victory against the Mughals. He even refused the crown which was offered to him at a very critical juncture declaring that the crown belonged only to royal blood. But finally he was imprisoned and executed inhumanly by unscrupulous officer.

There was great laxity in the law of primogeniture which the kings followed. This led to serious dispute for succession after the demise of a king. Besides, there was no proper training for the would-be king as many a time selection of a king could not be determined till the death of the sitting monarch. Another drawback which could be observed was that a weak king used to be flattered by self-seeking sycophants. Even the queens were not exception in this business thereby causing instability, chaos, interregnum in the country. The Ahom principle was that a prince could not succeed to the throne if certain limbs of his body got mutilated. When an unscrupulous prince would occupy the throne, he used to adopt harsh measure to get other princes' body mutilated so that no attempt could be made by any one to replace him. This method deprived the chances of many able princes to becoming king.

The Assamese army no doubt deserves praise for their valour, patriotism and truly martial characteristics. But the greatest drawback to the army was the absence of a good leader to command them more often. Lachit Barphukan for a short duration could offer the benefit of his leadership. But in the rest of the fighting scenes a terrible dearth of this quality was visible. Without the dynamic guidance of a supreme leader in the battlefield men, arms, ammunitions and provisions did not prove to be of much avail.

The defection amongst Ahom commander in charge of important positions was another drawback. Even there are

examples of king's father-in-law rebelling and passing secret informations to the invaders. General like Baduli Phukan betrayed the cause of his country and sold it for his meagre personal gain. Muhammedan inhabitants of Assam were trusted by the kings and even were given responsible position in the state affairs. But many of them betrayed the trust and passed on secret informations to the Mughals when entered into Assam.

The Muhammedan campaigns created a new chapter in the relation of Assam and Bengal. In ancient time we have references that Assam King could expand his territory occupying a large part of Bengal territory. Powerful rulers of Bengal also occasionally tried their best to expand their realm incorporating part of Assam. But this chapter did not create much of misunderstanding between the people of the two neighbouring countries. At the time of Muslim expeditions quite a large number of Bengali soldiers used to accompany the Muslims. Many of the Hindu Zamindars of Bengal after becoming vassals of the Muslim ruler played leading role in the war against Assam. Raja Sattrajit was one of them who played an important part in the Mughal victory in Assam. This created an anti-Bengali attitude in Assam. Even in the British period also Assamese people did not expect of Bengali help to the British in subordinating and suppressing the anti-British feeling of Assam. But the Bengali Hindus forgetting the plight of their co-religionist

went against the interest of Assam. This rift between the two sections has not yet been patched up.

An unhealthy feeling in Assam that the land was outside the Indian mainland throughout the courses of the Indian history can be treated baseless. In this vast Indian sub-continent military expeditions happened to be the main linking factor between the peoples. Assam in that way, used to draw attention from the ruling authority of Delhi more prominently from 1200 A.D. onwards besides their link in ancient past.

APPENDIX A

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCES

The following three letters were addressed by Atan Buragohain. Translated into English by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan from MS. Assam Buranji, No. 41 (DHAS). Quoted here from Dr. Bhuyan's Atan Buragohain and His Times.

1. To Nawab Rashid Khan, Fouzadar of Guwahati, February 1664 A.D.

What you have written about elephants and money is not unreasonable. But, you have yourself seen the plight of our country; and it is for this reason that we have not been able to deliver the entire complement of elephants and money. Still then, we have made over at the beginning the sum of Rs.140,000 and 74 elephants and we have now sent with Syed Kamal and Piroz Khan Rs.40,000 and 20 elephants. We shall send the remainder in due course. Do you think that we have wilfully refrained from delivering the remaining portion? Our four sons are with you, and the Nawab is aware of the affection which a father entertains towards his son. Please consider the fact that elephants can be captured only during the winter season. If we succeed in catching a large number, we shall not only send the remainder elephants, we shall also send 50 elephants, small and large, in lieu of Rupees 100,00 - Phalgun 9, 1585 saka.

2. To Nawab Rashid Khan, Fouzadar of Guwahati,
July 1665 :

Since previous times, the Nawab stationed at Guwahati remains in charge of the transactions between the two countries, and we are in the habit of conducting our correspondence and negotiations with the Gauhati Nawab. Now, you are responsible for the work in that place as we are responsible for the work over here. You should therefore act in a manner which will be satisfactory to His Majesty the king of Assam. It cannot be presaged whether an innovation will lead to good results or untoward consequences. You will therefore concede that adherence to previous practices is the desirable course. It is meet and proper that you should ask for the delivery of the stipulated elephants and money. But you know very well that we have delivered a portion already, and what remains undelivered will be sent during the winter. You should not therefore entertain any anxiety or dissatisfaction on this account - Sravan 2, 1587 saka.

3. To Nawab Shaishta Khan, Subedar of Bengal,
November 17, 1667 :

All the prestige and honour of our country vanished when you devastated our territories. We then promised to give you 3 lacs of rupees and 90 elephants. We made this promise only to preserve our boundaries as well as our integrity and honour. In pursuance of that promise, we have given you elephants and money, and our sons are with you as surety for the balance of the indemnity. Still we have not

got back our territories, or our subjects who had gone over to your land. Rashid Khan Nawab inflicted severe insults on our envoys during the reception at Umananda, and our Barmudoi was also grossly abused. Besides, requests are made for the supply of damsels, and when they are sent they are returned back. His Majesty the Swarga-Maharaja of Assam became highly incensed on receiving reports of these affronts, and he commanded us to attack Gauhati; but we interceded at the feet of the monarch, and he condescended to withdraw his orders. After this, Syed Piroz, on assuming charge of his office [as Fouzadar of Gauhati] deputed Syed Jafar Ukil to our place. His Majesty came to know that Syed Piroz Nawab was a good man, and we also came to the same conclusion. We sent nine elephants to Gauhati during the stay of Syed Jafar Ukil at our place. We were then told that Syed Piroz Nawab had made a request for furnishing him some virgins. Having heard this the Swargadeo was seized with indignation and wrath, and ordered an attack on Gauhati [Gauhati was attacked and occupied by the Ahoms on November 4, 1667, thirteen days before the date of this letter]. Now if you are desirous of friendly relations with us, please send for that purpose Ukils and epistles. If you have no such desire, well, it is your look-out. What shall I say more? You are all knowing yourself - Kartik 30, 1589 saka.

[Atan Buragohain addressed to Jayantia Raja. Quoted from Dr. S.K. Bhuyan's 'Jayantia Buranji'.]

4. To Raja Jasamattarai of Jayantia, November 1666 :

Your letter has reached this place in time and we have

noted its purport with joy. You have stated that we have deviated from the ways of amity. If that be the case, how would you explain our request for friendship communicated through your envoy Ramrai? You should also note that we have not withdrawn our Barmudoi from your country. We have been exchanging messengers and epistles in remembrance of the fact that the pious do not become altered even after the cessation of affection. We have continued in the old ways of friendship. As your letter did not conform to the practices of old times [the letter concerned had only one Shri before the name of the Assam king] we declined to send envoys and epistles. As you consider Jayantia and Gargaon to one and indivisible we also consider them to be as such. The party responsible for the despatch of an epistle improperly addressed has undoubtedly fallen from the path of truth. Attempts should therefore be made so that our relations of friendship may continue as before in an undisturbed manner.
- Agrahayan 8, 1588 saka.

APPENDIX B

INSCRIPTION ON CANNON

[From E. A. Gait's "Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam", Shillong, 1897, p. 29.]

1. Cannon in the Possession of Mr. Wood, a tea planter in Nogong :

"Cr Cr Svarganarayana deva maharajadhiraja Cakradhvaja Simhena jayalavdhastu samgrame yavananam Ksye punah prapatamastramidam bhupayacorihanam dhruvain Caka 1589."

King Cakradhvaja, having destroyed the Musalmans in battle in Caka 1589, obtained this weapon, which declares his glory as the slayer of his enemies.

2. Big Size Cannon at Dikom:

"Cr. Cr. Svarganarayana deva maharajadhiraja Cakradhvaja Simhena jayalavdhastu Samgrame Yavananam Ksay Punah praptamastramidam bhupayacorihanam dhruvam Caka 1590."

King Cakradhvaja, having again destroyed the Musalmans in battle in Caka 1590, obtained this weapon, which declares his glory as the slayer of his enemies.

This cannon also bears the following inscription in Persian:

"Az babat-i-fath-i-asham dar ihtimam-i-Sayyad Ahmad-al-Husain Arz dada Shud Dar Sin 1074 Hijri muwafik Sin (6)".

This cannon has been placed in charge of Sayed Ahmad al-Husain for the purpose of conquering Assam in 1074 Hijri.

3. Cannon in the Dak Bungalow Compound, Gauhati:

"Cr. Cr. Sarvarganarayana deva Saumareevara Udayaaditya Simhasya Cake 1594 Cr. Nityananda Coladhara Baruvaya garhova Camuva Kacudalai, Murali, Cidam, Puna, Mathura, Ramdhan, Krisnai ei Satota ojha."

During the reign of Saumareswar Udayaditya Simha under the order of Nityananda Coladhara Baruah seven experts Camuva Kacudalai, Murali, Cidam, Puna, Mathura, Ramdhan and Krisna manufactured this cannon.

APPENDIX C

APPROXIMATE CHRONOLOGY OF THE KINGS UNDER PERIOD OF STUDY

(i) Ahom Kings	A.D.
1. Sukapha	1228-1268
2. His son Sutenpha	1268-1281
3. His son Subinpha	1281-1293
4. His son Sukhangpha	1293-1332
5. His son Sukhrangpha	1332-1364
6. His brother Sutupha	1364-1376
interregnum	1376-1380
7. Sutupha's brother Tyaokhamti	1380-1389
interregnum	1389-1397
8. Son of Tyaokhamti Sudangpha (Bamunikownr)	1397-1407
9. His son Sujangpha	1407-1422
10. His son Suphakpha	1422-1439
11. His son Susenpha	1439-1488
12. His son Suhenpha	1488-1493
13. His son Supimpha	1493-1497
14. His son Suhungmung Swarganarayan Dihingia Raja	1497-1539
15. His son Suklengmung	1539-1552
16. His son Sukhampha or Khara Raja	1552-1603
17. His son Susengpha or Pratap Singh	1603-1641
18. His son Surungpha or Bhaga Raja	1641-1644

		A.D.
19.	His brother Sutyinpha or Nariya Raja	1644-1648
20.	His son Sutamla or Jayadhwaj Singh	1648-1663
21.	Descendant of Dihingia Raja - Supungmung or Chakradhwaj Singh	1663-1669
22.	His brother Sunyatpha or Udayditya	1669-1673
23.	His brother - Suklanpha or Ramdhwaj	1673-1675
24-27.	Suhung, Gobar, Sujinpha, Sudaipha	1675-1679
28.	Descendant of Dihingia Raja - Sulikapha or Lora Raja	1679-1681
29.	Son of Gobar Langi Supatpha or Gadadhar Singh	1681-1696

(ii) Koch Kings

Undivided Kingdom	
Biswa Singh	1515-1540
Nar Narayan	1540-1584
Western Koch Kingdom or Koch Bihar	
Lakshmi Narayan (accepted Mughal vassalage)	1584-1622
Bir Narayan	1622-1633
Pran Narayan	1633-1666
Eastern Koch Kingdom or Koch Hajo	
Raghu Deb	1581-1603
Parikshit	1603-1613
*Bali alias Dharma Narayan	1615-1637
Mahendra Narayan	1637-1643

*After Bali Narayan, Koch dynasty terminated and gradually reduced to that of Zamindari system.

Nawabs of Bengal

Pre-Mughal Period

	A.D.
Bakhtyar Khilji	1203-1206
Muhammad Shiran	1207
Malik Izzuddin Muhammad	1207-1208
Ali Mardan	1210-1213
Ghyasuddin Iwaz Khilji	1213-1227
Nasiruddin Muhammad	1227-1229
Malik Ikhtyar-uddin Balka Khilji	1229-1230
Malik Alla-uddin Jani	1230-1231
Malik Saifuddin Aibak	1231-1234
Aor Khan Aibak	1234-1235
Tughril Tughan Khan	1236-1245
Malik Tamar Khan-i-Qiran	
Malik Jalaluddin Masud Jani	1247-1251
Ikhtyaruddin Yuzback Tughril Khan (Mugshisuddin)	1251-1257
Malik Izzaddin Baban-i-Yuzbaki	
Malik Tajuddin Arslan Khan	
Tartar Khan	
Sher Khan	1272-1274
Amin Khan	1272-1274
Mughisuddin Tugril	1268-1281
Prince Nasiruddin Burghra Khan) same person (	1281-1287
Sultan Nasiruddin Mohmed) (	1287-1290
Ruknuddin Kaikus	1291-1301
Sultan Shamsuddin Firuz Shah	1301-1322

	A.D.
Ghyasuddin Bahadur Shah	
Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah	1342-1357
Sikandar Shah	1357-1389
Ghiyas-ud-din Azam	
Saifuddin Hamza Shah	
Shihabuddin Bazazid Shah	
Ghyasuddin Azam Shah	1380-1409
Rule by Hindu Dynasty	
Ruknuddin Barbak	1459-1474
Shamsuddin Yusuf	1474-1481
Jalaluddin Fath	1481-1487
Saifuddin Firuz	1487-1490
Nasiruddin Mahmud II	1490-1491
Shamsuddin Muzaffar	1491-1493
Allauddin Husain	1493-1519
Nusrat Shah	1519-1532
Alauddin Firuz	1532-1533
Ghiyasuddin Mahmud	1533-1538
Fariuddin Muzaffar Sher Shah	1538-1545
Islam Shah	1545-1553
Muhammad Shah II	1553-1555
Bahadur Shah II	1555-1561
Jalal Shah	1556-1563
Hazrat Ala Miyan Sulaiman	1564-1572
Bayzid Shah II	1572
Daud Shah	1573-1576

Mughal Period	A.D.
Munim Khan	1574-1575
Husain Quli Beg	1575-1578
Muzaffar Khan Turbati	1579-1580
Raja Man Singh	1594-1598-1605
Qutbuddin Kokah	1606-1607
Jahangir Quli Beg	1607-1608
Islam Khan	1608-1613
Qasim Khan Chisti	1613-1617
Ibrahim Khan Fath-i-Jang	1617-1624
Mahabat Khan	1625-1626
Mukarram Khan	1626-1627
Fidai Khan	1627-1628
Qasim Khan Jurjini	1628-1632
Azam Khan Mir Md. Baqar	1632-1635
Islam Khan Mashadi	1635-1639
Prince Muhammad Shuja	1639-1660
Mir Jumla	1660-1663
Shaista Khan	1663-1678
Prince Muhammad Azam	1678-1688

(Ref.: Sir J.N. Sarkar. History of Bengal, Patna, 1973.

H. Blockmann. Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal. Calcutta, 1968. Reprint.)

APPENDIX D

EXTRACT OF AHOM WRITING

[From G.C. Baruah. Trans. Ahom Buranji, 1930, pp. 140-147.]

Following pages from <u>Ahom Buranji</u> - a chronicle in <u>Ahom language</u> with parallel English translation by G. C. Baruah give an idea about Ahom script and style of Ahom writing.

For <u>Ahom Buranji</u> please see sources Chapter I.

[illegible]

129. [illegible]

129. In Lākni, Tàomit (i.e. in 1649 A.D.) in the middle of the month of Dinching (Ághon) and on the day, Katmut Chāophā Shuchingmung came to Nām.Jong from Garhgaon. On the day, Khutshān, the king proceeded to Mesamarā. In the month of Dinshām (Puh) and the day Kārāo, the king came to Maluāl, and halted there. On the day, Mungmāo, Chāophā Shuchingmung engaged different bodies of men in the work of the preparation of the construction of forts on land and in water. The heavenly king ordered to bring spears and swords and directed one Damarā Neog to place them in the forts to use them in time of war. Besides those things, shields and bows were also given. The king remained there to see the arrangement personally. Forts were erected on both sides. On the day, Tàoshingā, Lāsāi Phukan captured three Dafalas and made them over to the king. The king then proceeded down and halted at Kherkatiā. On the day, Kāpshingā, the king got four houses built. On the day, Dāpmut, the moon, disappeared in the sky. When the moon appeared in the month of Dinshām (Magh), on the day, Plekmit, the king raised earth walls surrounding the houses. On the day, Khutcheu, the king occupied the houses. On the day, Kāpshingā, the three Dāngariās (the Buragohāin, the Bargohāin and the Barpatra Gohāin) were ordered to go by the river Tilāo and stop at the mouth of the Kherkatiā branch of the Tilāo. The Dāngariās proceeded accordingly. They met the king and had a consultation with him. On the day, Khutmit the king left Kherkatiā, came to and halted at Bāghmara Chāpari. On the day, Dāpmāo, he advanced from Bhāgmarā Chāpari and halted at the month of the Tilāo (Lohit). On the day,

[illegible]

Mungshou, the king came to and stopped at Hāladhibāri, on the day, Shengā, he left for Mahuāl, On the day, Kākeu, he marched from Mahuāl and stopped at Mesāmarā. On the day Khutshingā, the king proceeded from Mesāmarā and arrived in Tāimung On the day, Kārāo, Thāokhentāi Khāmjangiās brought two gongs, two bells, two variegated Nagamāko (a kind of cloth), one bear tail with luxuriant hairs on and two ordinary Nagāmākos as tributes and offered them to the king, Shuchingmung at Garhgaon. The king dismissed them by offering presents. Tho king, then, appointed the son of Khāmjangia Barpātra as Barpātra in his father's place, presented him with a horse, a girdle, a loin-cloth and a pair of carings and ordered him to proceed to Khāmjang, on the day, Kāpmut, the king came to Dihing from Garhgāon. On the day, Raicheu, he proceeded to Tipām from Dihing. On the day Khutshi, he proceeded to and stopped at Chāgalikatā. On the day Tāoshi, he came to and remained at Dikāri. From Dikāri he came to Jakāi. On the day Rāishān, he left Jakai and came to Tāimunglung.

130. [illegible]

130. On the day, Mungrāo, one Chiring Khakanglāi came to the king and paid him homage at Garhgaon. In the month of Dinruk (Baisākh) and on the day, Khutshān, the king was suffering from cold. Then the brother of the wife of the Burāgohāin, the chief queen of Chāophā Shuchingmung and Chāo-Shāi her son conspired secretly against the king. The grandson of one Lāngushang and Huiphāk Burāgohain, the son of Lāikulā consulted how to get the favour of the country in case of their being

[illegible]

obliged to fight when they would rebel against Chāophā Shuchingmung. Lāngi Bhelā was sent for the third son of the king. They then ordered their men to call in Chāo-Shāi, the son of the queen to instal him as king. Coming to know of the plot, the king ordered his officers to arrest Huiphak Burāgohāin and his brothers and to fetter them. They were accordingly produced enchained before the king and was imprisoned in a room in the royal palace for a month. The news of the imprisonment of the brother of the chief queen was kept secret from her. In the month of Dinpet (Ahār) and on the day, Plekshingā, the king's mother died. Huiphāk Buragohāin was released with all his brothers. The king directed his men to construct a town at Charāideu. It was wanning of the moon. On the 16th of the month of Dincipit (Ahin) and on the day, Rāi-shingā, the king ascended the Halong at Charāideu. It was then new moon. On the day, Plekshingā, the king fell ill at Tāimung. Nobody took care of the king. The chief queen did neither see nor attend the king. Chāo-Shāi, the king's son and also the attendants paid no attention to the king. Then the Dāngariās consulting together sent words to Chāo-Shām (one of the king's son). They wished to make him king in place of Chāophā Shuchingmung. Chāosham, thus being informed of the wishes of the Dāngariās and others, expressed his willingness to become king. The whole country was in his favour.

131. [illegible]

SHUTĀMLĀ *ALIAS* JAYADHVAJ SIMHA *ALIAS* BHAGANIĀ RAJA.

131. In Lākni, Kakeu (*i.e.*, in 1650 A.D.), on the day, Kāpcheu Chāoshām was made king. The princes, Ring and Sheng, were against it. In the month of Dinshipshang (Kāti), on the day, Mungmāo, the king's father (Chāophā Shuchingmung) was placed under guard at Ranshekhām. Huiphāk Burāgohāin,

(143)

[illegible]

his two sons, and one Nānghat Bey were put to death. The chief queen of the deposed king and her son, the Dekā Raja were pressed to death. Then one Klingtum, a grandson of Lāluk, one Chāophrangdām Gohāin, one Sheokhām, one Khengkhām and one Chāoklang conspired to capture and depose the king. When the news of the conspiracy reached the king, he sent some men to seize the bodies of the Buragohāin, his brothers and sons and Shenkhām. They were, accordingly, captured and put to death at Rāilung. On the 5th day of the month of Dinching (Āghon) and on the day, Dāpmut, at about four Dandas in the morning, the king's daughter died. On the day, Kāmāo, at ten Dandas of the day, Chāophā Shuchingmung breathed his last. He ruled the country for full four years.

132. [illegible]

132. The news of the death of the deposed king was sent to Chāophā Shutāmla who was at Dayāng. On the day, Plekshān, elephants were caught at Dihing. On the day, Khutmit, the king engaged a tiger, a crocodile and a wild boar in fighting in the arena for public exhibition. The king witnessed the fighting mounting on an elephant. The wild boar got victory over the tiger and the crocodile. On the 19th of the month of Dinshi (Falgun) on the day, Mungplāo at about 2 p.m. the king raised the king post of his Holong (royal palace). On the day Khutmit, the Holong was completed. In the month of Dinhā (Chaitra), on the day, Bānplāo, the grandson of Chāosheng Bargohāin, the grandson of Shushānan, the grandson of Chingdāng Chum, one Tuni, one Asuk, the son of Sanātan Thakur, one Baghmariā, one Bashā, one Khunkhāskunchām and the son of one Ratan Kāri conspired against the king. Some one informed the king of the plot. The king then asked them to give battle. They said that they were quite ignorant of the plot. On the day Kātmut, the king put the whole body of the conspirators to death.

[illegible]

133. [illegible]

134. [illegible]

133. On the 7th day of the month of Dinruk (Baisākh), on the day, Kāpcheu, the king ascended the Hingarighar. At about eight Dandas in the morning, the king brought Somdeu to the Hingarighar. He opened the covering of the box in which Somdeu was kept and put the idol on the throne. (The king offered innumerable presents to all the people of the country, including the slaves, the attendants, the Ahoms and the Brahmans.) He passed seven days and nights with great amusements. Cannon were fired, harps played on and flutes blown. On the day, Khut-Shingā, the king planted an Áubar (a life giving banian tree) on the hill Charāideu. On the day, Mungplāo, the king ordered to erect the walls of the Holong. The walls were accordingly made. One Likshāi speared to death an wild elephant that approached the Holong. On the day, Plekngi, the king planted a Bātbar. The house of Somdeu was repaired and the idol was placed there. On the day, Kāpshān, the king planted a banian tree near the Malāi temple. In the month of Dinchit (Jaistha) and on the day, Kākeu one Lāsāi Hātimuriā Phukan produced before Chāophā Shutāmlā, Katakis of forty Chungi families with presents. In the month of Dinship (Bhādra) and on the day, Kāpcheu, a Kachari came to the heavenly king. He offered one horse, one white blanket, a pair of cymbals, a sword, a Bānbati and some plates to the king. The king dismissed the Kachāri by giving him presents and a letter.

134. In Lākni, Kāpcheu (i.e. in 1651 A.D.) in the month of Dinshipshang (Kāti), and on the day, Rungmut, the king offered five oxen, unhusked rice, gold jars, pots for washing feet, neck-ornaments (Assamese Galpata), twenty Mekhelās (woman's under clothes), Rihās (a kind of cloth used by the females for concealing their bodies and one end of

[illegible]

which is used for veil), Matangs (Casks), Kāhis (plates), cloths, rice, ginger and salt to the Brahmins. Then the king dedicated to gods one hundred cows which were taken by the Brahmins. In the month of Dinching (Ághon) and on the day Khutcheu, one Kamal Lochan, bringing presents with him, paid homage to the king, Shutāmlā, by falling prostrate at his feet. The king sent him back after giving him necessary instructions. In the first part of the month of Dinching (Ághon), on the day, Rungmut, the king ascended the Holong. He excavated a tank and made the Ghāts. The king dedicated the tank to the heavenly Lord, Indra and put some live fish in it. All the officers said it good. On the day, Rungkeu, the king proceeded to Nāmdeng. He then left Nāmdeng, came to and halted near the Mesā lake. He paid respects to the Idols there. On the day, Rungrāo, the king advanced up and stopped at the town called, Cheng. From Cheng, he came to Khāorāk. The king arrived at the capital in one hundred and twenty days.

135. [illegible]

135. In the month of Dinshām (Māgh) and on the day, Mungkeu, the king worshipped "Sheng" (Shengdeu). On the day, Katkeu, Chāophā Shutāmlā worshipped "Chum" (Somdeu). In the month of Dinhā (Chaitra), on the day, Plekshingā, Nawab Mirjā Shekh sent one Mahammad to our king. Mahammad came to and saluted Chāophā Shutāmlā, kneeling before him. He offered three horses, of which one was loaded with silver, one silver chain, a musical instrument and a satin cloth to Chāophā Shutāmlā for making friendship. The king gave him befitting presents and sent him back. In the month of Dinchit (Jaistha), the Lakma Nagas, coming stealthily cut our two men and four children. Tirupati Rājkhowā sent his men to inform the king of the matter. Thus informed, the king said that he would take measures to punish the Lākmā Nagas. The king held a meeting with the Dāngariās, the princes and all others to discuss on Nagā's affairs. In the month of Din-

[illegible]

pet (Ashār), on the day, Dāpmut, the king sent six Baruās and two domestics of Gutimali as Katakis to inform the matter to Tirupati. The king despatched the Pānikuar, the brother of Sāring Raja, the grandson of Burāgohāin of Lankak family, the son of Kaliā and one Lāshām Dihingiā Baruā with an army against the Lākmā Nagas. The Nagas came down to plunder our army. The Dāngariās attacked the Nagas. Our Tāihumpui confronted them. The Pānikuar and Lāshām Baruā, mounting on a female elephant, set fire to the houses of the Nagas. The Nagas, seeing their dwellings on fire, ascended the hill, and allowing houses to be burnt down, attacked our men. Our Tāihumkui was killed. The Nagas were vanquished.

136. [illegible]

136. In the month of Dinkāo (Srāvan) on the day Khutmit, some Jaytā (Jaintiā) guests came to Chāophā Shutamlā to pay him homage. The heavenly king allowed the Jaytā guests to come up in their boats. The king with the Chāodāng Baruā proceeded downstream the Dikhau river and stopped at a *ghat*. There the Jaytā guests paid homage to the king by offering many large boats, eight gold seats, and one hundred and forty umbrellas. The Jaytā guests said to the heavenly king that they ceded a great part of their dominion to the king of Mungdunshunkhām (Asām) and the provinces, Dumaruā, Kuphānali and Kāoban were theirs and they now prayed the heavenly king that His Majesty would be pleased to allow them to have the rule of the provinces back. The heavenly king said in reply that the provinces were merged in his country and were distributed amongst some frontier Chiefs, so it would not be possible to return the provinces now. Further he said that the Jaytā guests might

take some gold instead. With this, the king sent back the Jaytā guests.

137. In the month of Dinchit (Jaistha), the Sām king (king of Siam) sent a Kataki, Phupāimung, with some men to our king. The Sām Kataki reached our country. Our Pāchipālāi sent the news to Thāomunglung Khāmjang, Chāorāi Thāokhen and Thāonāngrāodāi. They came to meet the Sām Kataki. They said to the Sām Kataki that the news of his coming to our country should be sent to the heavenly king for his orders. The Sām Kataki was made to remain there. The news was sent to the king. The king ordered that if the Sām Kataki had come to make friendship he might come, otherwise not. The order of the king was communicated to the Sām Kataki. The Sām Kataki came to our king and pledged fidelity by drinking. The Sām Kataki was sent back. Chāorāikhenthāo, the son of Maubaruā and two Pandits were sent with the Sām Kataki. The Sām Kataki paid the king of Mungdunshunkham homage by offering a gold flute, a silver plate, a quantity of vermilion, a satin cloth, a stand, a drum and a *dhooti* (man's under cloth). The heavenly king also gave sufficient presents and necessary instructions.

APPENDIX E

ORIGINAL TEXT OF LETTERS EXCHANGED BETWEEN RAJA RAM SINGH AND LACHIT BARPHUKAN

Original Text of a letter addressed by Raja Ram Singh, the Mughal Commander to Lachit Barphukan, Assamese General, during the course of the Battle of Saraighat along with the reply of the Barphukan. After Sanskrit sloka, the letters were written in old Assamese language. The letters were carried by envoys who verbally explained the contents before the addressee.

Ram Singh had pleaded to Lachit to handover Guwahati thereby helping to maintain friendship. Lachit also had shown keenness for friendship but not at the cost of surrendering Guwahati.

1 — 1 Ram Singh's letter.

2 — 2 Lachit Barphukan's reply.

(Taken from Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, edited and compiled, 'Kamrupar Buranji', DHAS, 1958.)

APPENDIX F

PREVALENT TRADITIONAL STORY ABOUT PRE-MUGHAL VIII MILITARY EXPEDITION

[Please see Chapter IV]

According to tradition the Muslim expedition ending the rule of King Nilambar took place due to inner court conflict. The son of the Brahmin Minister Sashipatra of King Nilambar was suspected to have an intrigue with the second queen of the king. The son was then arrested and killed. The king invited Sashipatra for a banquet, and, after making him partake of his son's flesh, told him the whole story. The minister left the kingdom under the pretence of making pilgrimage to the Ganges in order to wash away the sin committed by his son. But his real object was revenge. To obtain it he went to Hussain Shah, the Muhammedan ruler of Gaur and telling him the weakness of Nilambar's kingdom, persuaded him to send a large army to invade it. Hussain Shah laid seige to Kamatapur but all his efforts to take it were frustrated. At last it is that he announced to the king his intention to return to his own country, but begged that before doing so his wife might be permitted to a visit to Nilambar's queen. By means of his subterfuge some armed men were introduced into the city in litters and with their aid it was captured. Nilambar was taken prisoner, and it was intended to carry him to Gaur, but on the way he made his escape and was never heard of again. (Collected from the prevalent story amongst the local people).

ANNOTATION AND GLOSSARY

Agiathuti	- a hillock converted into fort on the north bank of the Brahmaputra opposite Pandu.
Alaboi	- a vast plain in front of the Alaboi hill touching the Brahmaputra on one side and the Sesa river on the other.
Alamgirnamah	- an official history of the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb.
Amrajurighat	- a place at the foot of Kamakhya hill, used as a river anchorage of the Brahmaputra.
Andharubali	- sand bank between Itakhuli and foot of Kamakhya hill.
Asurar Ali	- a highway near Guwahati.
Aswakranta	- a hill opposite Kamakhya on the north bank of the Brahmaputra.
Bachari	- a kind of Ahom fleet.
Bahbari	- a fort on the north bank in Darrang.
Bahir Band and Bhitar Band	- two parganas of Koch Bihar state lying on the right bank of the Brahmaputra and to the west and south of Rangpur.
Barduar	- a frontier principality in Kamrup.
Barbaruah	- chief judicial and administrative adviser of the Ahom Government.

Bargohain	- one of the three most powerful ministers of Ahom Cabinet.
Barpatragohain	- one of the three most powerful ministers of Ahom Cabinet.
Barphukan	- Provincial Viceroy in charge of lower Assam.
Baruah	- a high ranking officer of the Ahom Government.
Bangal	- a term applied by the Assamese to stranger, outsider, foreigner and alien; any non-Assamese.
Bara (Bora)	- an officer commanding twenty paiks.
Beltola	- a frontier principality.
Bharari (Bharali)	- a river demarcating Kamrup and Darrang, rises from Bhutan and falls in the Brahmaputra.
Bhuyan	- an estate-holder.
Chaodang	- an Ahom clan, the members of which were appointed to inflict punishments on criminals including sentence of death.
Charaideo	- an old Capital converted into a religious metropolis by the Ahom Kings.
Charingia Raja	- an Ahom title conferred on the nearest male relative of reigning king.
Chintamanigarah	- a rampart in the midway of Gorgaon and Samdhara, facing the Brahmaputra and touching Gabharu Parbat.

Choki, Chouki	- a frontier outpost duly fortified and garrisoned.
Dakhinkul or kol	- a part of Assam lying on the south bank of the Brahmaputra.
Dangaria	- a title originally applied to the three Cabinet ministers of Assam, a title of respectability.
Deodhai	- an Ahom priest who offered worship to the deities.
Dhamdhama	- a fortified town of north Kamrup.
Dhubri	- a frontier fort of Assam on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, in Goalpara district.
Duar	- a pass or gate.
Duaria Baruah	- a frontier officer.
Dumuria or Dimuria	- a frontier principality.
Gadadhar R.	- rises in Bhutan hills and falls into the Brahmaputra near Dhubri.
Ghat	- an anchorage on the river bank.
Gharphalia	- an Ahom clan.
Ghoraghat	- situated at the right bank of the river Karatoya, frontier district towards Koch Bihar and Kamrup.
Ghorasal	- royal stable.
Gilah or Gilaghar	- situated on the west side of the Gadadhar river, about ten miles north of Dhubri. Summer Capital of Raja Parikshit.

Gohain	- an Ahom officer of high rank.
Gosain	- a religious instructor.
Hajo	- a headquarter city of Koch kings and Mughals, in north Kamrup.
Haris	- scavenger.
Hati Baruah	- superintendent of elephant.
Hat	- bazaar, market.
Hatisal	- stable for elephant.
Hazarika	- an officer in-charge of one thousand men.
Hengdan	- a straight sword; royal sabre.
Itakhuli	- an important fort and headquarter on Sukreswar hills at Guwahati.
Jogighopa	- a fort and border post on the north bank of Goalpara district.
Kajali, Kajalimukh, Kalang	- River Kalang is a branch of Brahmaputra. It flows by Kaliabar, Nowgong and Dimuria and rejoins the Brahmaputra at Kajali about 20 miles from Guwahati. The confluence of the main channels of Brahmaputra is known as Kajalimukh.
Kaliabar	- an important Ahom post.
Kamata or Kamta	- originally denotated the western part of the Brahmaputra valley up to the Karatoya and it was included in ancient Kamrup. The Mughal historians sometimes used this term Kamata or Kamrup as synonymous.

Karatoya	- is an ancient river mentioned in the Mahabharata as a sacred river. It was the boundary-line between the old kingdom of Kamrupa and rest. In Rennell's Map No. 9 it was shown as passing through Rangpur and Bogra with Ghoraghat on its right. This river was the frontier line between Koch Kingdom and Mughal Bengal.
Katakis	- envoys of the Ahom Government.
Khan-i-Khanan	- a Mughal title conferred on provincial viceroys of exceptional merit, a title given to Mir Jumla.
Kathalbari	- an Ahom fort more often visited by the Ahom king to supervise the military activities of lower Assam.
Kharghar	- a royal arsenal.
Kharbujaghat	- located in Mechpara Mouza of Goalpara district.
Khel	- a division or unit of Assamese subjects having to perform a specific service to the state.
Khuntaghat	- situated on the south bank of the Brahmaputra and is included within the modern district of Goalpara.
Koch	- a Hindu caste into which all converts from different animistic tribes are admitted.
Kulhati or Kuhhata	- situated midway between Srighat and Kajali near Sesa hills. Many battles were fought between Mughals and Ahoms.

Lakhau	- a place near Gargaon where Mir Jumla put up garrison.
Lathia Parbat	- a hill fort on the north bank which was made headquarter of Atan Gurhagohain at the time of Ram Singh's Assam Campaign.
Lauhitya	- river Brahmaputra.
Majuli	- biggest river island of the Brahmaputra in upper Assam.
Manas or Manaha or Banas	- this river rises from Bhutan hills and falls into the Brahmaputra, opposite Goalpara.
Mir Jumla	- Mir Muhammad Said Mir Jumla was one of the remarkable personalities in the 17th century history of India. Son of a Persian adventurer, migrating to Golkonda as a fortune-seeker, he rose by dint of his unrivalled abilities, and through successive stages from the post of a keeper of records to that of a Governor of Masulipattanam and finally to the exalted office of Wazir of the State of Golkonda State. Deputed by its Sultan to conquer Karnatak on his behalf, the Mir practically enjoyed 'regal independence' in his conquests, and became in effect the first Nawab of Karnatak. Then he transferred his allegiance to Shahjahan, who appointed him Diwan-i-Kul of Mughal Empire. For some time under Aurangzeb, he acted as Governor of Khandesh and finally as Viceroy of the important province of Bengal. Further, as the ally, confidential adviser and

General of Aurangzeb during the war of succession, the Mir was largely responsible for securing the throne for Aurangzeb. Again it was solely due to Mir Jumla's generalship and through his conquest of Kuch Bihar and Assam that the north-eastern push of the Mughal empire reached its logical culmination. He was truly called a Khan-i-Khanan. [Jagdish N. Sarkar. The Life of Mir Jumla, pp. xiii, xiv, v.]

Namjani - Lower Assam.

Nawara - Mughal flotilla.

Paik - a system of personal service under Ahom state.

Pancharatna - a hill fort on the south bank opposite Jogighopa in Goalpara district.

Pandu - administrative and military post of Mughals near Guwahati.

Pani Phukan - Ahom officer exercising judicial, revenue and military jurisdiction over north bank of Kamrup with headquarter at Aswakranta in north Guwahati. Literary meaning - an officer in-charge of water.

Pargana - a revenue division of the Mughals.

Phukan - a high ranking Ahom administrative post.

Pir - a Muslim mendicant of reverence.

Prahar - one-eighth part of a day; one prahar is equal to three hours.

Rajkhowa	- an Ahom officer of high rank i.e. commanding 3000 paiks.
Ram Singh	- Son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh who secured the defeat of Shivaji of Maharashtra when deputed by Aurangzeb. Under the terms of the Treaty of Purandhar 1665, when Shivaji visited Agra, he was made a prisoner by Aurangzeb. Ram Singh was put to guard the confinement of Shivaji. The escape of Shivaji from Agra was a discredit to Ram Singh. It was assumed that as a measure of punishment Ram Singh was deputed by the Emperor to command the Assam Campaign which was considered to be one of the most difficult expeditions.
Saikia	- an Ahom officer commanding 100 paiks.
Samdhara	- a strongly constructed Ahom fort on the north bank connected the Brahmaputra in one side and Bhamaraguri on another side.
Sala	- a fort constructed by Ahom connected Chandideogarah to Kapalkuchi in north and from the Brahmaputra to Pakariguri hill in south.
Sankos	- a river rises in Bhutan hills and meets the Brahmaputra near Dhubri.
Saraighat	- a river anchorage of the Brahmaputra near Amingaon opposite Pandu. The decisive battle ground where Ram Singh was defeated.

Satrajit	-	a Bengal Zamindar and a Mughal Vassal.
Sesa	-	a river passing by Srighat.
Simalugarah	-	a strong Mughal fort in south bank on way to Gargaon.
Singari	-	a fort in Darrang district.
Srighat	-	in between Hajo and North Guwahati several battles were fought here.
Sualkuchi	-	a place on the north bank about 20 miles west of Guwahati. Used by the Mughal for garrisoning and as assaulting point.
Swargadeo	-	literally the God of Heaven, a title adopted and applied uniformly to the Ahom sovereigns of Assam; a shortened form of Swarga-narayan-dev, the progenitor of the family of the Ahom monarchs. Ahom equivalent of it is Chaopha, Chao (Tungkhungia Buranji).
Umananda	-	a river island of the Brahmaputra in Guwahati.
Uttarkol	-	a country lying on the north bank of the Brahmaputra.

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